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# AU SOLEIL

OR

# AFRICAN WANDERINGS

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# LA VIE ERRANTE

OR

# IN VAGABONDIA

BY

GUY DE MAUPASSANT

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## AU SOLEIL


| | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| I. | IN THE SUN | 1 |
| II. | THE SEA | 5 |
| III. | ALGIERS | 8 |
| IV. | THE PROVINCE OF ORAN | 12 |
| V. | BOU-AMAMA | 23 |
| VI. | THE PROVINCE OF ALGERIA | 32 |
| VII. | A SALT LAKE | 50 |
| VIII. | KABYLIA, BOUGIE | 95 |
| IX. | CONSTANTINE | 114 |
| X. | AT THE SEASHORE | 118 |
| XI. | IN BRITTANY | 130 |
| XII. | THE CREUSOT IRONWORKS | 149 |


## LA VIE ERRANTE


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| I. | WEARINESS | 3 |
| II. | NIGHT | 9 |
| III. | THE ITALIAN COAST | 19 |
| IV. | SICILY | 38 |
| V. | FROM ALGIERS TO TUNIS | 88 |
| VI. | TUNIS | 98 |
| VII. | ON THE ROAD TO KAIRWAN | 118 |

# ILLUSTRATIONS

## AU SOLEIL


FACING PAGE

THE GRAND MOSQUE OF ALGIERS . . . . *Frontispiece*

GROUP OF KABYLES WITH A TAME LIONESS . . . 102


## LA VIE ERRANTE


PANORAMA OF CITY AND HARBOR OF GENOA . . . 24

SHOPS AND SHOPPERS IN TUNIS . . . . . 104

# AU SOLEIL

## I.

### In the Sun

Life, which is so brief and yet so long, becomes unbearable sometimes. It unfolds itself, always the same, with death at the end. We can neither stop it, nor change it, nor can we even understand it. Often, indeed, a rebellious feeling comes over us, as we realize the uselessness of such an effort. Whatever we do, we must die! whatever we believe, whatever we think, whatever we attempt, in the end we die! And it seems as if we must die to-morrow, without yet knowing anything, though we are heartsick with what we do know. When we realize this, we feel crushed with the everlasting misery of things, with human weakness, and the monotony of one's actions.

We rise, we walk, we lean out of the window. Opposite us, neighbors are breakfasting, as they breakfasted yesterday, as they will breakfast to-morrow.

There is a father, a mother, and four children. About three years ago the grandmother was with them — she is not there now. The father has changed very much since we became neighbors. He does not notice it, but seems content, even happy — the idiot!

They speak of a wedding, then of a death, then of the tender chicken they are eating, of the maid, who is dishonest. They trouble themselves about a hundred things, utterly useless and silly, — fools!

The sight of their apartment, which they have occupied for eighteen years, fills me with disgust. And this is what we call life! Four walls, two doors, one window, a bed, a table, and a few chairs, that is all! A prison! All abodes occupied for any length of time become prisons! Oh! to run away from it all, to avoid the well-known places, the same actions at the same hour, and, above all things, the same thoughts.

When you are weary enough to cry from morning till night, too listless to lift a glass of water to your lips, tired even of friendly faces, which, seen so often, cause irritation, sick of odiously placid neighbors, of familiar and monotonous things, of your house, your street, of the maid who comes to ask what you will have for dinner and turns abruptly on her heels, — those down-trodden heels that at every step raise the ragged edge of her dirty skirt, — when you are weary of the persistent fidelity of your dog, of the unchangeable colors of the wall-hangings, of the regularity of meals, of sleep in the same bed, of each action repeated daily, weary of yourself, of your own voice, of things repeated continually, of the narrow circle of your ideas, weary even of your own

face in the mirror,—then leave everything, and enter a life of new and changed surroundings.

Traveling is a vision in which we leave a known reality to enter an unexplored reality, which seems like a dream.

A station, a seaport, a whistling train with its escape of steam, a large steamer passing out to sea! Who can witness these things without a feeling of envy, a longing to be one of the travelers?

We all dream of some special country; with one it is Sweden, with another the Indies; one person prefers Greece, another Japan. As for me, I was attracted to Africa. It was an imperious longing that possessed me, a sense of craving for the neglected and abandoned desert, a presentiment of incipient passion.

I left Paris on the sixth of July, 1881. I wished to see Africa, land of the sun and the sand, in midsummer, under the heavy tropical heat, in the dazzling, blinding glare of a great white light. Everyone knows the beautiful lines of the poet Leconte de Lisle, upon the *midi*, the sun of the desert, the *midi*, whose rays spread over plains of motionless and limitless sand, that made me leave the blossoming shores of the Seine, as sung by Madame Deshoulières, the fresh morning bath, and the deep shadows of the wood, for these burning solitudes.

Another reason made Algiers particularly attractive to me at that time. Bou-Amama—that will-o'-the-wisp—was conducting that fantastical campaign of which so many foolish things were said and written. It was rumored that the Mussulman population was preparing a general insurrection; that they were to

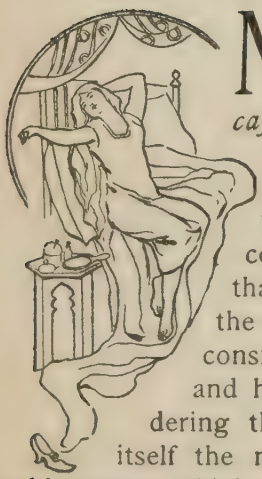
make a final effort; and that immediately after the Ramadan war would break out all over Algiers. It would be curious to see the Arab in these circumstances, and to attempt to read his soul, a thing that colonists never think of doing.

Flaubert has said: "One can imagine the desert, the Pyramids, the Sphinx, without having seen them; but what one cannot imagine is the head of a Turkish barber, as he squats on his doorstep."

Would it not be still more interesting to know what goes on in that head?

## II.

### The Sea



Marseilles throbs under the joyful sun of a summer day. It laughs, with its flag-masted *cafés*, its head crowned with straw, as if for a masquerade, its inhabitants busy and noisy. It rings with its peculiar accent, that accent heard through all the streets, that accent with which it challenges the world. A native of Marseilles is considered amusing wherever he goes, and he seems a kind of foreigner murdering the French language; in Marseilles itself the natives combine to exaggerate this odd accent, which makes it appear like the language of a farce. Marseilles in the sun, perspiring freely, smells of garlic, of beggars, and a hundred other things. It smells of unnamable foods nibbled by negroes, Turks, Greeks, Italians, Maltese, Spaniards, English, Corsicans, as well as the natives of Marseilles, all lying down, sitting, or loitering on the wharves.

In the basin of the Joliette, the heavily-laden steamers, with bows turned seaward, are getting up steam, and are crowded with men loading them with merchandise.

One of these, the "Abd-el-Kader," suddenly roars, for the old whistle has been abolished and replaced by a sort of siren, which has the cry of an animal, a frightful voice coming from the mouth of a smoking monster.

The great steamer, leaving its moorings, passes slowly in the midst of its fellows, and suddenly, the captain having given the order of "Full speed ahead!" it plunges forward, all eagerness, clearing a passage through the sea, leaving behind it a long white trail, while the coast retreats and Marseilles disappears on the horizon.

It is dinner hour on board and there are not many passengers, for few persons care to go to Algiers in July. At the end of the table sits a colonel, next him an engineer, then a physician and two merchants of Algiers, with their wives. The talk is of the country we are going to, and its form of government.

The colonel is emphatically in favor of a military government, speaks of tactics in the desert, and declares that telegraphy is useless and even dangerous to the army. He must have experienced some disappointment in war, through the fault of the telegraph. The engineer thinks it would be wise to place the colonies in the hands of a bridge-inspector who would build canals, dams, roads, and a hundred other things. The captain of the steamer, in a witty way, says that a seaman would be still better, as Algiers is inacces-

sible, save by water. The merchants point out the glaring faults of the present governor, and everyone laughs, and all wonder how anyone could make such mistakes.

Then we go up on the bridge, where nothing is to be seen but the sea—the sea so calm without a ripple, and silvered by the rays of the moon. The enormous vessel seems to glide over it, leaving in its wake a long trail of liquid fire. Overhead the sky is of a bluish black, strewn with glittering stars, obscured at times by the immense volume of smoke issuing from the ship's funnels, while the lantern at the top of the mast might be mistaken for a large star, moving in and out among myriad points of light. Nothing is heard but the dull roar of machinery in the hold of the ship. How charming are the quiet hours of the night, on the bridge of a vessel speeding onward!

All next day one lies thinking, under the spread-out awnings, with the ocean on all sides. The night comes again, and again the day follows. One has slept in the narrow cabin, on a bunk shaped like a coffin. Up and about: it is four o'clock!

What an awakening! We see a long hill, and, facing us, a white spot, which gradually grows larger—it is Algiers!

## III.

### Algiers

Unexpected vision, which enraptures the soul! Algiers is beyond my fondest hopes! How pretty the snow-white city with its dazzling light! An immense terrace, borne upon graceful arches, borders the harbor. Above it rise immense European hotels, and there also is the French quarter. Still higher is the little Arabian town, with innumerable tiny, white, odd-looking houses, which stand so close together as to appear to be entangled, and are divided by streets that look like lighted tunnels. The top row of these is supported by white-painted posts, the roofs of the houses being contiguous. There are abrupt declivities into inhabited holes, mysterious staircases toward dwellings, which look like burrows filled with crawling Arabs. A woman passes; she is grave and veiled, her ankles are bare and anything but attractive, black with the accumulation of dirt and perspiration.

From the end of the pier the view is marvelous. You gaze entranced at this brilliant cascade of houses, appearing to tumble down over one another, from the top of the hills to the sea. The effect is like the froth of a torrent, a froth of unusual whiteness; and here and there, like an immense bubble, a glaring mosque shines in the sunlight.

Everywhere you see a stupefied population crawling about. Beggars innumerable, clad in a simple shirt, or in two rugs sewed together in the shape of a chasuble, or in a bag with holes made in it for the head and arms, always barelegged and barefooted, covered with vermin as well as rags, come and go, abuse each other, and fight. Tartarin would say that they smelled of the Turk; for everything smells of the Turk here. And then you see a whole world of black-skinned babies, half-caste Arabs, negroes and whites, an ant-hill of shoeblacks, tormenting one like flies, bold and vicious at three years of age, and as sly as monkeys, insulting travelers in their native tongue, and following them about with their cry: "*Cié, Mossieu*" (Shine, Sir).

The following incident occurred on the day of my arrival and it sums up the history of Algiers and its colonization. As I was sitting in front of a *café*, a young black took hold of my feet, almost by force, and began polishing my shoes with great energy. After he had worked on them for about fifteen minutes and made them shine like glass, I gave him two sous. He said: "*Me'ci, Monsieur*" (Thank you, Sir) but did not attempt to rise. As he remained squatting at my feet, rolling his eyes as if about to have a fit, I said: "Be off, Arab!" For a moment

he neither answered nor moved, then suddenly catching up his shoe-box with both hands, he darted down the street, when I saw a tall negro boy apparently about sixteen, who had been hiding in a doorway, pounce on the little fellow. He struck him, stole his two sous from him, and walked away laughing quietly, while the poor little beggar howled with all his might.

I was indignant. My neighbor at table, an African officer, who was also a friend, said to me: "Leave them alone, it is the custom. So long as the younger boys are not strong enough to take the sous from their companions, they black shoes, but as soon as they feel able to knock down the little ones, they do not work any more. They watch for the small bootblacks, and rifle their pockets." My companion added smilingly: "Nearly everyone does the same here."

The European quarter, pretty from afar, has, on nearer view, the look of a new city sprung up in a climate that does not agree with it. On landing, a large sign attracts the eye—"Algerian Skating Rink." At the first step you take you are uncomfortable, held by the sensation of a progress not applicable to that country, of a brutish, awkward civilization, little adapted to the customs, the sky, and the people. It is we who look barbarous among these barbarians, who are brutes, it is true, but brutes who are at home, and to whom the centuries have taught many customs the sense of which we do not appear to understand.

Napoleon III. once said a wise thing (probably whispered to him by one of his ministers): "Algiers

does not need conquerors so much as initiators." But we have remained brutal, awkward conquerors, infatuated with our stereotyped ideas. Our morals, which we have flaunted before these people, our Parisian houses, our customs even, all these offend the taste, as would glaring faults in art, common sense, and understanding. Everything we do seems wrong, a challenge to this country, not so much to its inhabitants as to the land itself.

A few days after my arrival, I was a spectator at a ball given in the open air, at Mustapha. You might have thought it was at Neuilly. Gingerbread shops, shooting galleries, ring-and-toss, somnambulists, clerks dancing with shopgirls the real French quadrille, while behind this inclosure, where one paid on entering, in the large and sandy drill ground, hundreds of Arabs lay motionless in their white tattered garments, with the moon shining down brightly, while all listened with grave and serious faces to the general uproar of the French pleasure-seekers.

## IV.

### The Province of Oran

To go to Oran from Algiers takes a day in the train. One first crosses the plain of Mitidja, which is fertile, shady, and well populated. This is always pointed out to travelers to prove the fertility of this colony of ours. Without doubt the Mitidja and the Kabylie are two beautiful countries. The Kabylie has certainly more inhabitants than Calais; the Mitidja will have as many before long. What is to be colonized then? is asked; but I will take up this subject later.

The train rolls on; the cultivated plains disappear; the land becomes barren and sandy, the real land of Africa. The horizon stretches out as far as the eye can see, in a long, sterile, burning line. We follow the immense valley of the Chelif, shut in between mountains desolate in their grayness, without a tree, without a blade of grass. As we go along, the mountains grow lower and lower, opening up here and there, as if to show the wretched misery of

the ground, parched by the burning sun. An unlimited space stretches out, perfectly flat, bound in the far distance by the invisible line which joins the sky to the earth. And here and there, in these barren solitudes, we see numerous white spots which might be taken for the eggs of some giant bird. They are marabouts, altars raised to the glory of Allah.

In this yellow, endless plain, sometimes we see sunburned Europeans standing about, watching the speeding train as it flies past, and close to them, in mushroom-like tents, we perceive bearded soldiers. These are hamlets of small agriculturists, protected by a detachment of regulars.

On this stretch of barren and dusty land, we make out, now and then, what looks like a small cloud running along, close to the ground, and ascending slowly toward the sky. It is a rider, whose horse's hoofs raise this cloud-like, fine, burning dust. Each of these clouds turns out to be a man, whose hooded cape we finally can make out.

Now and then we see native encampments. They are barely perceptible, these Arab tents, as they are usually hidden near some dried-up torrent, where children lead goats or sheep or sometimes a cow to pasture, although the word "pasture" in a country like this seems a mockery. The color of the brown linen huts, surrounded by dried briers, blends with the monotonous hue of the earth. On the embankment, made by the railroad, a dark-skinned man, with calfless legs, enveloped in whitish rags, contemplates the iron monster passing by.

Further on we meet a troop of nomads on the march. The caravan advances, leaving a cloud of

dust behind it. The women and children are riding donkeys and small horses; the men are walking ahead with much majesty of demeanor.

It is like this all along. When the train stops, every hour or so, a European village appears, with a few houses, such as might be seen in Nanterre or Rueil, some dried-up trees, one of which bears the French flag, in honor of the fourteenth of July; and at one of the gates a gendarme stands, an exact counterpart of the gendarme one sees at Rueil or Nanterre.

The heat is intense. No metal of any kind, even that inside the car, can be touched with impunity. The water in the gourds burns the mouth, and the air that blows through the car appears to come from an overheated oven. At Orléanville the thermometer registers 100° in the shade!

We arrive at Oran in time for dinner. Oran is a real European town, and a commercial one, more Spanish than French, and with very little of interest. One meets in the streets fine-looking girls with dark eyes, complexions of ivory, and beautiful teeth. When the weather is clear, it is said that the coast of Spain, their native country, can be seen from here.

As soon as one sets foot on this African soil, one is seized with the desire to go further south. So I took a ticket for Saïda, which is reached by a narrow-gauge railroad ascending to the heights. Around Saïda, with his horsemen about him, that will-o'-the-wisp, Bou-Amama, is to be seen sometimes.

After a few hours of travel we reach the first slope of the Atlas mountains. The train pants and puffs as it climbs; it advances slowly, winds around

the side of the barren hills, passes near a large lake formed by rivers, which is protected by the famous dam, the Habra. An immense wall, fifteen hundred feet long, one hundred and twenty feet high, one hundred and twenty feet wide, damming forty-two million cubic feet of water, rises over the boundless plain.

This dam broke down a year ago, drowning hundreds of men and causing destruction to the whole country. At that time a national subscription was being taken up for the families of the men lost in a flood in Hungary or Spain; but no one took any interest in this French disaster.

We then pass narrow defiles between mountains that look as if they had been scorched by a recent fire; we outline peaks, veer along slopes, swerving to right and left to avoid obstacles, finally attaining great speed in the open country, while still zigzagging a little, as if through sheer force of habit.

The cars are rather small, the engine being no larger than an ordinary street-car. It appears exhausted at times, groaning and puffing, and proceeding so slowly that one could almost follow it on foot; then suddenly it starts off again at great speed.

The whole country is barren and desolate. The Sun, king of Africa, ferocious ravager that he is, has devoured the flesh of these valleys, leaving only stones and dust, where nothing can grow.

Saïda is a little town after the French style, and it appears to be inhabited only by generals. There are at least ten or twelve of them, and they seem to be forever holding conventions. One feels like crying out to them: "Well, general, where is Bou-

Amama to-day?" The civilian here has no respect for the man in uniform.

The principal inn leaves much to be desired. I sleep on a mattress in a whitewashed room. The heat is unbearable. I close my eyes, hoping to sleep, but alas!

My window is open and looks out on a small courtyard. I hear dogs barking; they seem far, very far away, barking jerkily, as if answering one another. In a short time they come nearer, they are now close to the house, among the vines in the street. There are five hundred, perhaps a thousand, starving and ferocious dogs, who guarded the Spanish encampments on the heights. Their masters dead or gone away, these animals have banded and wander about in search of food; then, discovering the town, they descended on it, encircling it like an army. During the day they sleep in ravines, in holes in the mountains, but as soon as night falls, they come into Saïda for food.

The men who are late in returning home carry revolvers with them, for they are usually followed by twenty or thirty of these brownish dogs, which might be taken for wolves.

They bark at times in a continuous way, fearful to hear, enough to drive one crazy. Then other cries are heard, the shrill yelps of jackals, and above it all one hears the strong and singular voice of the hyena imitating the dog's cry in order to attract and devour him. Until daybreak this uproar continues without ceasing.

Saïda, before it was occupied by the French, was protected by a small fortress built by Abd-el-Kader.

The new town is on low ground, surrounded by bald, rocky heights. A narrow river, across which one could almost leap, waters the surrounding fields, where grow beautiful vines. Toward the south the neighboring hills look like a wall; these are the last steps leading up to the heights. On the left rises a rock of brilliant red, about fifty feet high, and on its summit is the *débris* of ruined masonry. This is all that remains of the Saïda built by Abd-el-Kader. This rock, seen from afar, seems to cling to the mountain, but on climbing it one is filled with surprise and admiration. A deep ravine, hollowed out between two walls, divides this ancient redoubt from the neighboring hill. This hill is of purplish stone, slashed here and there with fissures, where fall the winter rains. Through this ravine runs the river, in the midst of bushes of rose-colored laurels. From above, it looks like an Oriental rug spread in a corridor. This carpet of flowers is dotted here and there with ferns. The descent of the valley is by a path used only by goatherds.

Further on, a stream (L'Oued Saïda), which is here called a river, but in reality is only a brook, ripples among the rocks under large blossoming shrubs, floating and undulating gracefully. The water is warm, almost hot. Enormous crabs, on seeing me, creep along with a singular rapidity, and with raised pincers. Large green lizards disappear in the foliage. Sometimes a snake glides by.

The ravine narrows, as if about to close. A loud noise above my head startles me. An eagle, surprised in its nest, soars away toward the blue sky, with slow but strongly-beating wings, so large that they seem to touch both walls.

In about an hour I struck the road leading toward Aïn-el-Hadjar, climbing up over the dusty hill.

In front of me walked a bent old woman, in a black skirt and cap, carrying a basket in one hand and in the other a kind of parasol, a huge red sunshade. A white woman here — where one sees none but the tall negro woman, with her yellow, red, and blue garments, leaving, as she passes, that odor of human flesh that will turn the stoutest stomach!

The old woman, exhausted, sat in the dust, panting in the torrid heat. Her face was wrinkled by innumerable lines, like those one sees in a crumpled garment, and her look was weary, depressed, and hopeless.

I spoke to her. She was an Alsatian, who had been sent to this country, with her four sons, after the war. She said to me: "You come from over there?" That "over there" grieved me.

"Yes."

And she began to weep. Then she told me her simple story.

Some land in this country had been promised to them, and they had come, this mother with her children. Three of her sons had died in this murderous climate, and now there remained but one, who was sick. Their fields, though large, yielded nothing, for want of water. The poor old woman kept repeating: "Ashes, sir, nothing but burned ashes! One cannot grow a cabbage; not even a single cabbage!" She clung to that idea of a single cabbage, the possession of which probably represented to her the sum of earthly happiness.

I never saw anything so pathetic as this good woman from Alsace thrown on this soil of fire where

not even one cabbage could grow. How often she must have thought of the old country, the green country of her youth, this poor old soul!

On leaving me she asked: "Do you know whether they would give us any land in Tunisia? They say it is a good country. It is sure to be better than this, anyway, and it might save my son's life."

I had a constant desire to go further south. But the whole country was at war, and I could not venture alone. A chance arose, however, as a train was about to take provisions to the troops encamped along the salt lakes.

It was a day when the sirocco was raging. From early morning the south wind blew with its slow, heavy, devouring breath.

At seven o'clock the small convoy started out, consisting of two detachments of infantry, with their officers, three trains with water cisterns, and the engineers of the company, for no train during the last three weeks had been able to reach the end of the line, part of which had been destroyed by the Arabs.

The engine, called "The Hyena," starts out straight for the mountain, making as if it would go through it. Then suddenly it curves to one side, dips into a narrow valley, describes a half circle, and reappears about fifty feet above the spot where it was a little while ago. It turns again, ascends, zigzagging all the time, unfolding like a long ribbon creeping toward the summit.

There are large buildings along the way, chimneys of factories, an abandoned town. These are the magnificent mills of the Franco-Algerian Company.

It was here that the grain was milled, before the Spaniards were massacred. This place is called Aïn-el-Hadjar.

We climb still higher. The engine pants, groans, slows up, and finally stops. Three times it tries to start again, but fails each time.

It goes back a little to get a start, but at this point it remains still, without the strength to ascend the rough slope.

Then the officers order the soldiers out to help in pushing up the train. It starts ahead slowly, moving step by step. We all joke and laugh, the men making fun of the engine. At last it is all over. Here we are on the heights.

The engineer, leaning far out, watches the tracks ceaselessly, for fear they may be cut away; and we are all intent on the horizon, alert to discover the smallest cloud of dust which might indicate a rider, still invisible. We all carry guns and pistols.

Sometimes a jackal runs past us; an enormous hawk flies away, leaving a camel's carcass almost entirely devoured; wild hens, very much like partridges, disappear among the dwarf-like palms.

Two small companies of foot-soldiers are camping at the village of Tafraoua, where we stop. A great many Spaniards were killed at this spot.

At Kralfallah, there is a company of Zouaves, hurriedly building a stronghold, with rails, beams, telegraph poles, anything they can lay their hands on. We take breakfast here, and the three officers, all young and gay, offer us some coffee.

The train starts once more. It runs along on the limitless plain, where tufts of *alfa* make it look like

a smooth stretch of sea. The sirocco becomes unbearable, throwing up in our faces the burning air of the desert, and now and then, on the horizon, a dim form appears. Now it is an island, again a lake, or rocks sunk in water; it is a mirage.

On a sloping hill we see blackened stones and men's bones, the remains of Spaniards. And still we see more dead camels, always half-eaten by hawks.

We go through a forest, but what a strange forest! An ocean of sand, where tufts of evergreen, here and there, look like giant heads of lettuce in a gigantic kitchen garden.

Sometimes we fancy we see a rider in the distance, but no, he disappears; we must have made a mistake.

We reach L'Oued-Fallette, still in the midst of a deserted and gloomy land. Then I wander away with two companions, always toward the south. We climb a low hill in the intense heat. The sirocco sheds fire; it dries the perspiration from one's face as soon as it appears, burns the lips and eyes, and dries up the throat. Under every stone we find scorpions.

Around the train, which looks from here like a big black beast lying down on the dry sand, the soldiers load the weapons sent from the nearest encampment. Then they move away in the dust, slowly, with weary steps, under the scorching sun. We see them for a long while, then they disappear in a cloud of dust.

There are now six of us on the train. We cannot touch anything, for everything burns. The brasses of the car seem reddened as if with fire. We scream if our hands touch the steel of our pistols.

A few days ago the tribe of Rezaïna, turning rebels, crossed this salt lake, that we found we could not reach to-day, as the hour was too late. The heat was so great when these people crossed that dried marsh that they lost all their water-bottles, while sixteen of their children died in their mothers' arms.

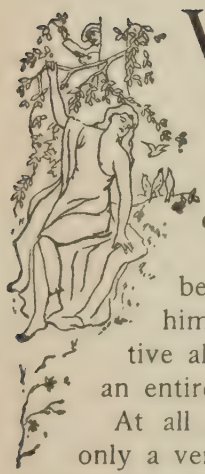
The train whistles, and we leave L'Oued-Fallette. A remarkable deed had made this place famous.

A military post was established here and guarded by a detachment from the 15th Regulars. One night two Arab soldiers arrived at the outposts, after riding horseback for ten hours, bringing an important order from the general commanding the forces at Saïda. According to custom, they waved a lighted torch to make themselves known. The sentinel, a raw recruit, not knowing the regulations and customs of the south, and not having been instructed therein, discharged his gun at the couriers. The poor devils advanced notwithstanding, when the whole post took to arms, and, putting themselves in position, fired a fusillade.

After a hundred and fifty shots, the two Arabs gave up and went away, one of them having a ball in his shoulder. Next day they arrived at headquarters, bringing back their dispatch.

## V.

### Bou-Amama



Very clever is the man who can solve, even to-day, the riddle of Bou-Amama. That man whom no one ever saw, who made game of our army, disappeared so completely as to make one think that he never existed.

Officers deserving of credence, who believed they knew him, have described him to me, others, no less truthful, positive also of having seen him, have given me an entirely different description of him.

At all events, this prowler was the chief of only a very small band of men, probably driven to rebellion through starvation. These men never fought but to rob villages or pillage trains. They do not appear to have acted thus from hatred or because of religious fanaticism, but simply from hunger. With our system of colonization, consisting as it does in ruining the Arab, in depriving him of his rest, in pursuing him without mercy, we must expect to see insurrections.

Another reason for this campaign was the presence of Spaniards on the heights.

In that ocean of *alfa*, in that gloomy, greenish stretch, motionless under the burning sun, dwelt a real nation, hordes of swarthy-faced men, adventurers whom distress or other reasons had driven from their native land. Wilder and much more feared than the Arabs even, isolated from cities, from all law, all power, they did what their ancestors had always done before them in a new country, they were violent, bloodthirsty, terrifying even to the primitive inhabitants. The vengeance the Arabs wreaked on them was fearful.

Here, in a few words, is the apparent origin of the insurrection. Two Mussulman priests preached rebellion openly to one of the tribes of the south. Lieutenant Weinbrennar was sent with an order to arrest the chief of the tribe. This officer had only four men with him. He was assassinated.

Colonel Innocenti was sent to avenge his death, and the aid of the military chief of Saïda was given to him.

On the road the armed contingent of natives met the Trafis who were also to join Colonel Innocenti. Quarrels arose between them, when the Trafis turned rebels and left to join Bou-Amama.

Here occurred the affair of Chellala, which has been so often related. After the sacking of his convoy, the colonel, who seems to have been spoken of very disparagingly by everyone, returned by forced marches toward the Kreïder, in order to re-enforce his column, thereby leaving the road entirely unprotected. His adversary was quick in taking advantage of this.

I must mention here a strange fact. On the same day the official dispatches reported Bou-Amama as being in two places one hundred and fifty miles apart.

The chief, profiting by this chance, passed within twelve miles of Géryville, and on the way killed Brigadier Bringeard, who had been sent into this openly rebellious country with only a handful of men to establish telegraphic communications. After this assassination Bou-Amama proceeded on his way northward.

He then crossed the territory of the Hassassenas and the Harrars, and virtually gave those two tribes the order for a general massacre, which was carried out soon after.

At last he arrived at Aïn-Kétifa, and two days later was camping at Haci-Tirsine, only twenty-two miles from Saïda.

The military authorities, becoming alarmed at last, sent word to the Franco-Algerian Company to recall all their agents, the country not being considered safe. Trains were running all night to the extreme limit of the line; but it was impossible to recall all the men in a few hours as they were scattered over a territory of a hundred and fifty miles. And on the eleventh, at daybreak, the massacre began.

The murdering was done chiefly by the tribes of the Hassassenas and those of the Harrars, who were exasperated with the Spaniards living on their territories.

And yet, on pretext of not inciting them to rebellion, these tribes who had slaughtered nearly three hundred men, women, and children, went unpunished.

Arab riders found loaded with spoils, and with garments belonging to Spanish women on their saddles, were released, it is said, on the plea that proof of their complicity was wanting.

So, on the night of the thirteenth, Bou-Amama was camping at Haci-Tirsine, twenty-two miles from Saïda. At the same time, General Cérez was telegraphing to the governor that the rebel chief was attempting to return south.

In the next few days this daring fellow pillaged the villages of Tafraoua and Kralfallah, loading his camels with booty and carrying away with him provisions and merchandise to the value of millions of francs.

He rode up once more to Haci-Tirsine to reorganize his troops; he broke his convoy in two, one section of which went toward Aïn-Kétifa. There it was stopped and pillaged by the mounted Arabs (section Brunetière).

The other section, commanded by Bou-Amama himself, was caught between General Détrie's column, which was camping at El-Maya, and that of General Mallaret, whose headquarters were at Ksar-el Krelifa, near the Kreïder.

To pass between the two camps was no easy task. Bou-Amama sent a party of riders before the camp of General Détrie, who pursued them with his whole army as far as Aïn-Sfisifa, far beyond the salt lake, convinced that he was on the chief's track.

The ruse was successful. The road was free. The day following the general's departure the insurgent chief occupied Détrie's camp; this was on the fourteenth of June.

On the other hand, Colonel Mallaret, instead of guarding the passage of the Kreïder, encamped at Ksar-el-Krelifa, four miles further on. Bou-Amama immediately sent a great number of riders to file past the military post, and the colonel contented himself by firing six cannon-shots, which have become legendary. During this time the convoy of camels was passing the Kreïder, at the only point where crossing was possible. From there the chief must have put his provisions under shelter with the Mogrars, his tribe, stationed four hundred miles south of Géryville.

Whence come these many precise details? will be asked. From everyone. They are sure to be contested, I know; if not on one point, then on another. I cannot affirm these facts; I have gathered only those which seemed probable. It would be impossible, in Algiers, to be positive about anything happening three miles beyond any one spot. As for military news, during all this campaign it appeared to be supplied by some practical joker. Bou-Amama was signaled at six different places on the same day by six different commanding officers, who were sure, one and all, of holding him. A complete collection of these official dispatches, with a little supplement containing those of authorized agents, would make amusing reading. Certain dispatches, whose improbability was too evident, were actually suppressed in the telegraph offices in Algiers.

An amusing caricature, made by a colonist, gives to my mind a very good explanation of the situation. It represents an old general, fat, gold-laced, with enormous mustaches, standing facing the desert. He contemplates with a puzzled look this immense, bare

stretch of country, whose limit his eye cannot reach, and murmurs to himself: "They are there! . . . Somewhere!" Then he turns to his aide-de-camp, motionless behind him, saying pompously: "Telegraph the government that the enemy is before me, and that I start in pursuit!"

The only reliable information I got came from Spanish prisoners, who had escaped from Bou-Amama. I had occasion to converse through an interpreter with one of these, and this is what he told me:

His name was Blas Rojo Belisaire. While leading a convoy of seven carts, on the night of the tenth of June, he, with his men, found a number of broken carts on the road, and scattered here and there were the bodies of the murdered drivers. One of them was still alive, and they tried to revive him, but a troop of Arabs fell upon them. The Spaniards, having but one gun, surrendered; but they were all killed on the spot, except this Blas Rojo, spared, no doubt, on account of his youth and handsome face. We know that the Arabs are not indifferent to beauty in men.

He was brought into camp, where he found other prisoners. At midnight, for no apparent reason, one of these was killed, he was told. The next day, on the eleventh, Blas learned that more prisoners had been killed.

The day had been set apart for a general massacre. At night, the raiders brought in two women and a child.

On the twelfth, they broke camp and were on the march all day.

On the thirteenth, at night, they camped at Dayat-Kereb.

On the fourteenth, they marched toward Ksar-Krélifa. This was the day on which the Mallaret affair took place, and the prisoner did not hear the cannon, which leaves it to be supposed that Bou-Amama sent only a small detachment of men to file past the French post, while the convoy with the spoils, with which was Blas, passed the salt lake, some miles further, well under shelter from fire.

For eight days they walked to and fro, without any apparent aim. On arriving at Tis-Moulins the Arabs, who quarreled continually, finally separated, each chief taking his prisoners with him.

Bou-Amama was very considerate to his captives, especially the women, whom he assigned to a special tent, where they were guarded.

One of these, a beautiful girl of eighteen, had been compelled to live with one of the chiefs, who threatened her with death if she resisted; but when Bou-Amama heard of it, he refused to sanction such a union.

Blas Rojo was in the service of Bou-Amama, but he never saw him. He saw only his son, who directed the military operations. He appeared to be about thirty years of age, a tall, thin man, pale, with deep-set eyes, and he wore a short beard. He owned two sorrel horses, one of which had formerly belonged to the French commanding officer, Jacquet.

Blas Rojo had not heard about the shots fired at the Kreïder. He eventually ran away when near Bas-Yala, but, not knowing the country very well, he was compelled to follow the channel of dried-up rivers, and after walking for three days and three nights, he arrived at Marhoun.

He told me that Bou-Amama had with him five hundred horsemen and three hundred foot-soldiers, besides a convoy of camels to carry the spoils.

For two weeks after the massacres, the trains went to and fro on the short railroad. At times, those in charge of it gathered in some wounded Spaniards and fine-looking women, naked and bleeding.

The inhabitants of the country all join in saying that the military authorities, with a little foresight, could have avoided this butchery. They could not, it seems, manage a handful of rebels. What was the reason of their inability to do so, when one compares the perfection of our firearms with the ancient muskets of the Arabs? I leave it to others to indicate the cause and explain it all.

The Arabs have this advantage over us, however, against which we struggle in vain. They are the sons of this country. Living on figs and a few grains of wheat, indefatigable on this soil, which exhausts men from the north, riding horses as strong and sturdy as themselves, and like them insensible to the heat, these men can ride a hundred miles a day. Having no baggage, nor convoys of provisions to drag after them, they go from place to place with surprising rapidity. They pass between two camps at a furious gallop, and a few miles further attack a village which everyone thought quite safe, and they return at the same pace, when they are supposed to be miles away.

In European wars, no matter how prompt is the march of an army, it cannot be moved about without its whereabouts being known. The mass of baggage

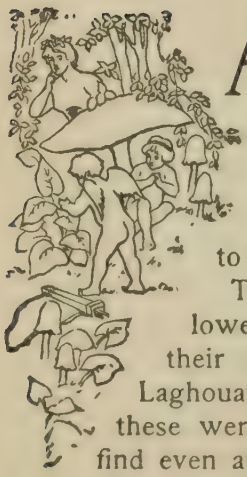
is fatal to quick movements and always discloses the route followed. A party of Arabs leaves no more trace of its passage than a flight of birds. These roving horsemen come and go around us with the rapidity of flying swallows.

When they attack, we can conquer them and nearly always beat them, notwithstanding their courage. But it is impossible to pursue them; one can never reach them when they take to flight. And so they avoid encounters, and are content with harassing our troops.

They charge with impetuosity, galloping furiously on their lean horses and rushing toward us in a whirlwind of white linen. They discharge their long guns while galloping, and, suddenly describing a curve, tear away with great speed, leaving here and there on the ground behind them a white bundle, fluttering like a wounded bird with blood on its wings.

## VI.

### The Province of Algeria



Algerians, the real Algerians, know very little of their country beyond the plain of the Mitidja. They live quietly in one of the most charming cities of the world, declaring that the Arabs are an ungovernable people, good only to kill or to throw back in the desert. They have never seen any but the lowest and vilest of Arabs, idling in their streets. In *cafés*, they speak of Laghouat, of Bou-Saada, and of Saïda, as if these were foreign countries. It is rare to find even an officer who knows all three provinces. They nearly always remain at one station until they return to France.

It is only fair to add that traveling is extremely difficult as soon as one leaves the known roads of the south. One cannot do so without the help and goodwill of the military authorities. The commanding officers consider themselves omnipotent, and an unknown individual, if he dared to penetrate these lands, would risk a great deal of danger of attack

from the Arabs, so they say. A solitary man would be immediately arrested by a public officer, escorted to the nearest police station, and brought back to civilization between two native soldiers.

But if a man can show any credentials, he will meet with the kindest treatment from the men in office. Living alone, so far from any neighbors, they receive travelers in the most charming manner. Being so much alone, they are well read, well educated, and converse with ease; isolated in this large and desolate country, with its boundless horizon, they all become deep thinkers, as solitary workers usually do. Having left France with the usual prejudice against these men, I came back with changed ideas.

Thanks to many of these officers, I was enabled to make long excursions inland, out of the known highways, and to go from tribe to tribe.

The Ramadan had just begun, and there was great anxiety in the colony, for there was fear of a general uprising at the end of this Turkish Lent.

The Ramadan lasts thirty days, during which time no disciple of Mahomet can drink, eat, or smoke from the early morning hour when the sun appears, until the corresponding hour at night, when one cannot distinguish a white thread from a red one. This hard rule is not followed to the letter, and one sees many a lighted cigarette, as soon as the sun goes down, long before the eye has ceased to distinguish between a white or a red thread. Except for this hurry to smoke, no Arab transgresses this severe Lenten rule, this complete abstinence.

Men and women, boys from the age of fifteen and girls of eleven or twelve, remain all day without

food or drink. It is not so bad to go without eating, but to abstain from drinking is terrible in this fearful heat. There are no dispensations in this Turkish fast; no one, indeed, would dare to ask any. Even the public women, the Oulad-Naïls, who throng all these Arab centers and large oases, fast just as the priests do, perhaps even more than they. And those among the Arabs whom we think civilized, who appear in ordinary times to accept our customs and share our ideas, these, even, become savagely fanatical and stupidly fervent, as soon as the Ramadan begins.

It is easy to understand the effect of this furious exaltation on these narrow and obstinate minds. All day long these wretched beings meditate on an empty stomach, while watching their conquerors, who eat, drink, and smoke as much as they please. And they say to themselves that if they kill one of us during the Ramadan, they will go straight to heaven; and they think that the time of our rule over them is drawing to a close, for their priests teach them that they will soon put us out of this country, pushing us into the sea with the butts of their guns.

It is especially during the Ramadan that the Aïssaounas, scorpion-eaters, snake-swallowers, and religious mountebanks flourish, the only persons perhaps, excepting a few miscreants and nobles, who have not this violent faith.

Among the nobles, there are a few such cases. I can only cite one:

When about to start on a twenty days' march toward the south, an officer asked the three soldiers who were to accompany him not to observe the

Ramadan, knowing full well that he could never get any work from these men if they were exhausted by fasting.

Two of them refused, and the third answered: "Lieutenant, I do not fast; I am not a priest, I am of noble birth."

He was, in truth, of good birth, the son of one of the most ancient and illustrious families of the desert.

There is a singular custom, dating from the occupation by the French, which it is ridiculous to keep up when one thinks of the terrible consequences it might have for us. As we wished at first to conciliate these people, and as to flatter their religion appeared the best way of doing so, it was decided that the French cannon should give the signal for fasting during this holy time. So, in the morning, at the first peep of dawn, a boom of cannon proclaims the fast; and every night about twenty minutes after the setting of the sun, from all the cities, all the forts, and all the military places, another cannon-roar is heard, which is the signal for millions of cigarettes to be lighted and drinks to be given out in hundreds of *cafés*, while all over Algiers are prepared innumerable dishes of kouskous.

I assisted, in the great mosque in Algiers, at the religious ceremony with which the Ramadan begins. The building is quite plain, with whitewashed walls and floor thickly carpeted. The Arabs enter briskly, barefooted, carrying their shoes in their hands. They place themselves in long regular rows, wide apart from one another, in straighter ranks than those of a regiment at drill. They place their shoes on the

floor near them, with other trifles they may have in their hands, and they remain as motionless as statues, their faces turned toward a small chapel, which indicates the direction of Mecca.

From this chapel the mufti officiates. With a soft, broken-down, monotonous voice, he intones a sorrowful chant, that once heard is never forgotten. The intonation sometimes changes, when the assistants, with a silent, rhythmical movement, go down on their knees, touch the floor with their heads, and rise rapidly, without even a tremor to mar the trembling voice of the old mufti. And ceaselessly these people go down and rise again, with a celerity, a silence, and a regularity almost fantastical. One never hears the bustle of moving chairs, the coughing, and whispering usually to be heard in most Christian churches. One feels that a rude faith hovers over these believers, bends and raises them like automatons; it is a dumb and tyrannical faith, which, taking hold of their bodies, makes their faces immovable, though it should wring their hearts. An unaccountable feeling of respect, mingled with pity, comes over the spectator as he sees these lean fanatics, having no flesh to interfere with the celerity and suppleness of their prostrations, perform their religious rites with the mechanism and regularity of Prussian soldiers at drill.

The walls are white, the rugs on the floor are red; the men wear white, red, or blue garments, with other colors besides, according to the gorgeousness of their gala apparel; but all the devotees are gracefully draped, and of noble mien, as they stand in the soft light that falls from the shining lusters.

Several priests occupy a raised platform, singing the responses with the same intonation given by the mufti. And this goes on indefinitely.

At night, in the Ramadan, is the most favorable time to visit the Casbah. The appellation of Casbah, which signifies citadel, is now used to designate the whole Arabian town. As these people fast and sleep all day long, so must they eat and live during the night.

The little streets, abrupt and rugged, like mountain paths, narrowing and turning continually, crossing and recrossing each other, so profoundly mysterious that one lowers the voice unconsciously when speaking, at night become inhabited by a population that appears to have sprung out of the "Arabian Nights." We feel we are traveling through the country described in the tales of the Sultana Schéhérazade. Here are the enormous low doors, as thick as prison walls, with their wonderful ironwork; here, also, are the veiled women; there, in the deep recesses of the half-open doors, are faces barely seen, and we hear vague sounds coming from these houses, tightly closed, like secret coffers.

On the doorsill men and women lie, eating and drinking. Sometimes the groups obstruct the entrance altogether. One must step over bare limbs, feel with the hand to find a footing in the midst of all these bundles of white clothes, out of which appear the heads and arms of the loungers.

The Jews open the hovels in which they transact their business; and pleasure-houses are so numerous that one meets them at every turn.

In the *cafés,* standing closely together, or seated on

benches against the wall, or even lying on the floor, men are drinking coffee out of tiny little cups. You see them, motionless and dumb, holding in their hands the cups which now and then they carry slowly to their lips. Twenty of them will huddle together in a space that would hold comfortably only ten ordinary men.

Calm-faced fanatics come and go, among these quiet drinkers, trying to incite them to rebellion, assuring them that the end of their slavery is near.

It is said that the first symptoms of an insurrection always appear in the village of Boukhrari, which is on the road to Laghouat; and we decided to go there.

On looking up at the Atlas mountains, from the immense plain of the Mitidja, one sees a gigantic slit in the mountains toward the south; it is as if an ax had cut it open. This gap is called the gorge of the Chiffa, and it is through this that the routes pass that lead to Médéah, Boukhrari, and Laghouat.

We enter the gap in the mountains; we follow the shallow river of the Chiffa and find ourselves in a narrow road, a wild and wooded copse. There are streams everywhere. The trees grow on this straight cliff, fastening here and there, as if scaling the high rock.

The passage grows narrower. The solid rock on both sides seems to threaten us; the sky looks like a blue ribbon, winding in and out at the summit, and, suddenly, at an abrupt turn, a little river appears at the entrance of a ravine covered with trees. Here is the inn of the "Ruisseau-des-Singes," the Monkey-River Inn.

Before the door flows a murmuring brook, filling this corner of the earth with fragrance and freshness and reminding one of the calm valleys of Switzerland.

We rest and doze in the shade; suddenly, above us, a branch bends and breaks; we rise quickly and then, through the thick foliage, we see a hurried flight of monkeys, tumbling over each other with leaps and bounds and uttering shrill cries.

There are hundreds of them, some enormous creatures, and others that are quite small. A few, tamed by the owners of the inn, are caressing and quiet. One, quite young yet, and caught only a week ago, is still very wild.

When the visitor remains quiet, they advance, watching him intently all the time. One would think the traveler was the sole amusement of these inhabitants of the valley. On certain days, however, there may not be one in sight.

Beyond the inn of the "Ruisseau-des-Singes," the valley narrows still more, and suddenly we come upon two large cascades, which seem to fall from the top of the cliff, two masses of limpid water, like ribbons of silver. How sweet and refreshing to see water in this land of Africa!

We ascend for a very long time; the gap grows less deep and there are fewer trees. We climb still higher, and the mountain appears more barren at every turn. We are in the fields now, and when we reach the top of the cliff, we see, to our surprise, oaks, willows, and elms, the trees of our own country.

We sleep at Médéah, another little town similar to so many we have in France.

After leaving Médéah we experienced fierce ravages of the sun. We crossed a forest, sparsely planted, showing everywhere a burned stretch of earth and not a living thing to be seen.

On the left there is a small valley, red and barren, without a blade of grass. A shadow suddenly crosses slowly over this stretch of sand, a dark stain on the naked earth. This shadow is the only real inhabitant of this mournful and death-like place; it seems to reign here like a mysterious evil spirit.

I look up and I see, with its spread-out wings, the scavenger of the desert, the lean vulture, soaring above his domain; over which reigns supreme the other master of this vast country,—the Sun, the cruel Sun.

When we descend toward Boukhrari, we can descry, as far as the eye can reach, the endless valley of the Chélif; we see it, in all its hideousness, in the yellow misery of the soil. It looks tattered and worn, like an old Arab, a valley where the bed of the stream is drained to the mud by the fire from the sky. The sun here has conquered everything, destroyed and pulverized every living thing, and its fire, which replaces the air, fills the atmosphere.

You feel something on your forehead; in any other country it would be air, but here it is fire. Something floats in the distance, one would say it was mist, but here this haze is fire, or rather a living and visible heat. If the soil were not charred to its very center, this steam would remind one of the smoke which rises from the burning of living flesh. And all this has a peculiar color, blinding in its glare, the color of hot sand mingling with the purple of the melting sky.

There are no insects in this dust, only a few large ants; none of the hundred little pests of our country could exist in this oven-like heat. On certain torrid days even the flies die, as they do in the north after a cold spell.

It is barely possible to raise hens. We see the poor fowls, with wide-open beaks and flapping wings, hop about in a mournful though comical way.

For the last three years the streams have been dry, and the all-powerful Sun seems to glory in this great victory.

At last we see a few trees, but they are far from flourishing. Boghar is at our right, at the top of a dusty hill.

At the left, in the hollow of the rock, crowning a hillock barely distinct from the earth, so colorless is it, appears an Arabian village against the sky, the village of Boukhrari.

At the foot of this cone of dust, hidden in the fold of the hill, are a few houses, where lives a mixed community.

Boukhrari is one of the largest villages of Algeria, on the edge of the northern frontier, a little beyond the Tell, and in the zone of transition between the civilized countries and the desert. Its situation gives it political importance, making it a connecting link between the Arabs of the coast and those of the Sahara. As such, it has always been the pulse of all insurrections. To this place comes the given order, from it the command is sent out. The tribes who are furthest away send their men to Boukhrari to find out what is going on. This point is watched and looked up to from all parts of Algeria.

The French government alone takes no interest in what goes on in Boukhrari; it has made it into a town, patterned after those in France, governed by a mayor, some sleepy-eyed peasant, assisted by a forester. Anyone can come and go as he pleases. The Arabs, no matter what part of the country they come from, can go about and intrigue to their hearts' content, without any interference whatever.

At the foot of this village, two or three hundred feet away, the mixed community is governed by a civilian, who has unlimited power over this empty territory, which hardly seems worth while guarding at all; but he cannot interfere with the neighboring mayor in the discharge of his duties.

Facing this, in the mountain, is Boghar, where dwells the commanding officer of the military district. This man has full power here, but can exert no authority over Boukhrari, that village of natives being ruled by its own mayor. It is this dangerous spot which is overlooked, while the neighborhood is watched carefully. We look for evil effects, but take no trouble to correct their cause.

And what is the result? The officer and the civilian in charge of the mixed community, when they are friendly, organize a sort of secret police, and try to obtain various information without the knowledge of the mayor.

Is it not surprising to see this Arab center, which is known as being dangerous, really more free than any city in France; while, at the same time, a Frenchman finds it impossible to penetrate here on military territory without the protection of influential friends?

I found an inn in the village of the mixed community, and spent the night there. It was stifling; the air seemed to have been absorbed by the heat of the previous day.

I arose at the first peep of dawn. The sun appeared as if eager to begin its incendiary work. In front of my window, opening on the horizon, already torrid, stood a small stagecoach, on the yellow panel of which I read: "Mail for the South." For the south! Then one could go further south, in this August heat. The south! what a fascinating word!

I looked at that magic word, as if I had never seen it before, and seemed suddenly to understand its hidden meaning. For well-known words, like well-known faces, assume a new significance, sometimes, that one cannot account for.

The south! The desert, the nomads, the unexplored lands, and the negroes. It is a new world, almost a new hemisphere. The south! how exhilarating is the phrase when one is on the edge of the Sahara!

In the afternoon I visited the village of the natives. Boukhrari is the first village where one sees Oulad-Naïls. One is astonished at sight of these courtesans of the desert.

The crowded streets are filled with Arabs, many of them lying in doorways, talking in low voices or sleeping. Everywhere their floating white garments seem to increase the universal whiteness of the houses. Suddenly from a doorway a woman appears, whose headdress seems of Assyrian origin, surmounted by an enormous diadem of gold. She wears a long dress of a brilliant red; her arms and

ankles are encircled with shining bracelets, and her face, with its straight lines, is tattooed with blue stars.

Other women join her, a great many of them, all wearing this monumental headdress; a mountain of hair, on each side of which a thick braid hangs as far as the lower tip of the ear, where it is drawn back to be lost in the masses of back hair. They always wear tiaras, some of which are very costly. The breast is hidden under necklaces, medals, and other heavy jewelry; while two strong silver chains, hanging low down from the neck, support a padlock of the same metal, curiously engraved, from which hangs the key.

Some of these girls wear only tiny bracelets as yet; they are simply beginners in their profession. The others, the older ones, sometimes carry about on their persons jewelry to the value of ten or fifteen thousand francs. I saw one whose necklace was composed of eight rows of twenty-franc pieces. They hoard their savings in this way. The rings on their ankles are also of massive silver, and are surprisingly heavy, for, as soon as they accumulate silver pieces to the value of two or three hundred francs, they give them to the native jewelers to melt and make into chased ankle-rings, symbolical padlocks, chains, or bracelets. The diadems they wear are obtained in the same manner.

The monumental headdress, a clever tangle of twisted braids, takes almost a day to put up, and needs an incredible quantity of oil. For that reason, they do not dress it more than once a month, and take great care not to disarrange this high and elab-

orate edifice of hair, which gives out a disagreeable odor in a short time. It is worth while to go to see them when they dance in the Moorish *cafés* at night.

The village is silent. White-robed figures lie in doorways. The night is fearfully hot, and brilliant with stars; these stars of Africa shine with a clearness the like of which is never seen elsewhere — the brilliancy of a fiery diamond, palpitating, living, intense.

Suddenly, on turning a corner, a noise attracts us, a wild and rapid music, a rumble of drums which is drowned by the fierce, sharp sound of the flute, on which the proprietor of the *café* plays indefatigably.

On the doorsteps, looking on without entering, Arabs lie in their white robes, which look like moving light, in the clearer shining that comes from the interior. Inside, rows of men, motionless and white also, are seated on boards along the walls, under a very low roof. And in the center of the room, lolling on the floor in their flaming tinsels, their flashing jewelry, with their tattooed faces, and their headdresses so like the Egyptian bas-reliefs, the Oulad-Naïls are waiting.

We enter and no one moves. And so, according to custom, we take hold of some of the Arabs and hustle them out of their seats; they move away with impassive faces, and some of the others make room for them.

On an elevation at the rear, four men, standing in ecstatic poses, are beating with frenzy on the tambourines; and the master — a tall negro — walks about in a majestic way, blowing furiously on his flute, never stopping for a moment.

Then two Oulad-Naïls rise, and taking up a position at the end of the room which has been left unoccupied, they begin to dance. The movements consist of a slow glide, whose rhythm is accentuated by a tap of the heel, which makes the ankle-bracelets ring out like a bell when the whole body bends in a methodical limp-like step; the hands are raised as high as the eyes, and are turned about gracefully, the fingers snapping briskly. The face, astonishingly rigid, is turned a little, and the eyes alone move about, following the action of the hands, as if fascinated by the graceful attitudes they assume.

The dancers approach one another in this way, their hands touching as they meet. A tremor seems to come over them, their figures sway to and fro, a long lace veil trailing behind them. They touch hands again, bending backward gracefully, as would two amorous doves, their long veils beating and spreading out like the wings of a bird. Suddenly they straighten up again, impassive once more, and continue as far as the line of spectators with their slow and limping glide.

Not all of them are pretty, but all possess a strange charm. Nothing can give an adequate idea of the impassiveness of these Arabs, among whom these women, covered with gold and flaming garments, pass and repass with rhythmical grace.

These prostitutes came originally from one tribe only, the Oulad-Naïl. They gathered their dowries in this way, and returned home to marry, after accumulating the necessary money. This was one of the customs of the tribe, and no one thought any the less of them for doing it. To-day, although it is still

understood that the girls of this particular tribe go away to earn money in this fashion, nearly all the tribes supply the Arabian towns with courtesans.

The proprietor of the *café* where they appear is always a negro. As soon as this person sees any strangers drawing near, he glues on his forehead, by some unknown process, a five-franc piece of silver. With this decoration he stalks through the building, blowing furiously on his flute all the while, and pointing to the money on his forehead, to induce the visitor to give him as much again.

Those of the Oulad-Naïls who are of noble birth show great generosity and delicacy of feeling in their dealings with visitors. If the lover of a few minutes admires the rug that serves as a couch, the noble prostitute's servant carries it to him, shortly after he has returned to his lodgings.

There are, as is usually the case, men who live on the earnings of these women, and sometimes a girl is found with her throat cut and all her jewels stolen. A man she has loved and lived with disappears at the same time, and is never seen again.

The room where they receive men is a narrow apartment, whose walls are of clay. In the oases, the roof is sometimes made of reeds, packed tightly, where hordes of scorpions hide. The couch is made of rugs, placed one over another.

Rich Arabian or French inhabitants who wish to pass a night in luxurious orgy remain until daybreak in their Moorish baths, attended by their servants. They eat and drink during the course of the bath, and vary the practices of their usual sleeping accommodations.

This question of morals brings up a very difficult subject.

Our ideas, our habits, and our instincts differ so absolutely from those with which one meets in these countries that one hardly dares speak at home of a vice which is so common there that Europeans are neither astonished nor scandalized by it any more. You are inclined to laugh instead of being indignant. It is a very delicate subject, but when you try to make anybody understand the familiar life of the Arabs, and to explain the peculiar characteristics of that people, it is a matter that you can hardly pass over without mention.

The traveler meets there at every step those unnatural phases of love between beings of the same sex that were sanctioned by Socrates, the "friend" of Alcibiades.

True, in history one often finds examples of that strange and unwholesome passion to which Cæsar abandoned himself — a passion to which the Romans and Greeks gave way, a practice that Henry III. made the fashion in France, and of which many great men have been accused. But these examples are exceptions as remarkable as they are rare. In Africa this abnormal phase of human passion has permeated so thoroughly the morals — if one may use that word — of the Arabs, that they seem to look upon it as being just as natural as its opposite.

Whence springs this aberration of instinct? From many causes, doubtless. Perhaps from the heat of the climate, which excites the passions of the body, and therefore destroys in men of ardent temperament that delicacy, that comprehension of natural right

which preserves us generally from customs and contacts which repel.

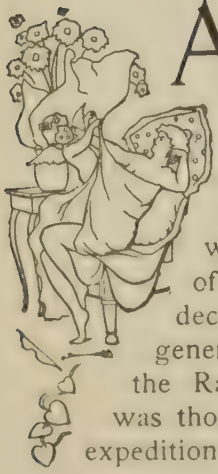
There are yet other customs, commonly known, but so base that I cannot here comment upon them.

Coming down one night from Boukhrari, I saw three Oulad-Naïls, two dressed in red and one in blue, standing motionless in the midst of a group of Arabs, all lying down. They looked like fierce goddesses, dominating a prostrate people. All eyes were fixed on the fort of Boghar, up above, on the long dusty hill facing them. All were motionless, attentive, as if something wonderful were about to happen; each holding between his fingers a freshly-made cigarette.

Suddenly a puff of white smoke appeared at the summit of the fortress, and immediately all cigarettes were lighted, while the ground shook slightly with the roar of the cannon that gave the signal for the end of the daily fast.

## VII.

### A Salt Lake



As I was breakfasting one morning with the captain of the Arabian post at Boghar, who is one of the most obliging and competent officers here, the conversation turned to an order which two young lieutenants were about to carry out. This was a trip inland into the territories of Boghar, Djelfa, and Bou Saadar, to decide and locate the water-courses. The general fear of an uprising at the end of the Ramadan was still uppermost, and it was thought safer to prepare the way for an expedition to the different tribes of this part of the country.

No map has yet been made of this region. There are only topographical notes, made by the few officers who have passed this way, indicating, approximately, the springs and wells. These notes have sometimes been hastily scribbled on the pommel of a saddle, and they include also rough sketches of the localities, made without any instrument whatever.

I begged to be allowed to join the little troop, and was permitted to do so. We left two days later, at three o'clock in the morning. A Turkish soldier woke me by pounding on the door of the little inn. On opening the door, I beheld a man dressed in a red vest, embroidered with black; his wide trousers were gathered at the knee and tucked in the long, red leather gaiters worn by riders in the desert. He was an Arab of medium size. His nose had been slit open by a sword-cut, and the scar left one of the nostrils entirely exposed. He was called Bou-Abdal-ah, and he said to me:

"Sir, your horse is waiting."

"Has the lieutenant arrived yet?" I asked.

"He is coming," he answered.

Soon after, a noise could be heard in the barren valley, which was still dim; then shadows appeared and passed on. I could just make out the silhouettes of three camels loaded down with our canteens and camp-beds, and the few other necessary things for a twenty days' trip in a solitary region barely known to these officers.

In a short time, coming from the direction of Boghar, I heard the galloping of a troop of riders, and the two lieutenants arrived with their escort, composed of a soldier and an Arab rider, named Dellis, a man of noble birth, belonging to one of the most illustrious families of natives.

I leaped on my horse and we were off. The night was still intensely calm, one might say motionless. After going north a short distance, following the valley of the Chélif, we turned to the right into a valley just at daybreak.

There is no twilight in this country, and it is seldom that one sees those crimson clouds, long drawn out and brilliantly variegated, the blazing or blood-red clouds of our horizons in the north, as the sun rises and sets.

Here the sunrise is at first a vague glimmer, which increases rapidly, spreads, and covers everything in a few seconds. And suddenly, at the top of a hill, or on the edge of the endless plain, the sun is seen just as it will look all day, and not with that reddish, sleepy look which it assumes in our country on a foggy morning.

But the strangest thing of all, in these dawns in the desert, is the complete silence. Who does not know, at home, the first chirruping of birds, heard long before dawn, and that other answering cry in the neighboring tree, and following the incessant chatter, a series of quick, sharp notes, mingling with the continuous crowing of cocks in the distance; the clamor that follows the awakening of animals, the happy, joyful voices in the trees and bushes.

In the desert nothing is heard. The enormous sun rises above the earth, which it has devastated, and seems to look down upon it in a masterful way, as if to make sure that no living thing is left to devour.

No cry of an animal is ever heard, except perhaps the neighing of a horse; not a sign of life appears, apart from our beasts of burden, as they drink at the stream, near which we have been encamped.

The heat becomes intense immediately. We put on, over the flannel hood and the white cap, the large *medol,* a straw hat with a very wide brim.

We followed this valley slowly. As far as we could see, all was bare; the earth was of a yellowish gray, burning and superb. Sometimes in a hollow, where stagnated a little water, or in the dried bed of a river, a few reeds could be seen making a small stain here and there; sometimes, in a fold of the mountain, two or three trees disclosed a spring. We had not come yet to that region, which we were soon to cross, where there is absolutely nothing with which to quench one's thirst.

We still climbed on. Small valleys adjoined the one we were in, and as midday drew near, the horizons almost disappeared in a misty heat, whose tones were of faint pinks and blues, appearing to be white in the distance, but slightly colored, and assuming an exquisite softness and an infinite charm, when compared with the blinding glare of our immediate surroundings.

At last we arrived on the top of the mountain, and the chief, El-Akhedar-ben-Yahia, with whom we were to camp, came to meet us, followed by a few riders. He was an Arab of illustrious birth, the son of the pasha, Yahia-ben-Aïssa, nicknamed "the military pasha with the wooden leg."

He escorted us to his camp, which was near a spring, where stood four enormous trees whose roots were deep in water, the only green spot to be seen from this height, everything else being dry and stony as far as the eye could reach.

Breakfast was served immediately, the chief not joining us, on account of the fast of Ramadan. But he sat with us to see that we had all we wanted, and so did his brother, El-Haoués-ben-Yahia, chief of

the Oulad-Alane-Berchieh. With them was a boy about twelve years old, somewhat thin, but of a graceful and noble mien. I had noticed him a few days ago, in the Moorish *café*, among the Oulad-Naïls.

I was struck at that time with the fineness and dazzling whiteness of the garments of this frail little Arab, with the nobility of his manner, and the evident respect with which everyone treated him. When I expressed surprise at his being allowed, at his age, to be with courtesans, they said: "He is the youngest son of the military pasha. He comes here to see life!" How different from our French customs!

The child recognized me and came forward to shake hands. As he was too young to fast, he sat down with us, and with his thin little fingers began to tear apart the pieces of roast mutton. Meanwhile, I thought I understood that his two older brothers, the chiefs, were chaffing him about his trip to Boukhrari, asking him where he obtained that silk scarf about his neck, and whether it was the gift of a woman.

That day we dozed away under the shade of the trees. I woke up as night was falling, and climbed a small hill to scan the horizon. The sun, about to disappear, was of a reddish tint, in the midst of an orange-colored sky. And everywhere, from north to south, from east to west, as far as one could see, the rows of mountains spread out before me were all pink, like the wings of a flamingo. One would call it a fairy-like apotheosis of color, something unusual, fictitious, unnatural even, withal admirably beautiful.

Next day, we came down from the mountain, on the other side of it, into a valley of such length that it took us three days to cross it. Notwithstanding this, we could see the chain of the Djebel-Gada facing us. This was a mournful stretch of sand, or rather a dust-like earth, with tufts of *alfa* growing here and there, compelling our horses to pick their way on either side to avoid them.

These plains of the desert are full of surprises. From afar they look quite flat, when, in reality, they are full of undulations, like the sea, which from a distance after a storm looks quite smooth, but, on nearer view, discloses the long swell of its waves. The slope of these earth-waves is too slight to be felt, and you never lose sight of the mountains in the distance; but at the same time, a whole army could easily be hidden behind any of these hillocks and not be discovered.

It is just this peculiarity that made the pursuit of Bou-Amama so difficult on the heights of south Oran.

Every morning at dawn we resume our march through these endless plains; every night we meet a few riders, draped in their white cloaks, who lead us to a much-mended tent, under which rugs are spread out. We eat the same food every day, we converse for a few minutes, then drop off to sleep and dream.

And far away we all feel! Far from the world, from life, from everything, as we lie under that small, low tent, through the holes of which we can see the stars, and also the immense country of arid sand.

This part of the earth is very monotonous to look at, always the same, charred and dried; yet one wishes for naught here, one regrets nothing, and

one aspires to nothing. The calm landscape, with its torrent of light, suffices to the eye, the thought, the senses even, because it is complete, absolute, and one cannot conceive it otherwise. The sight of the thin verdure even offends, as does anything artificial or false.

Every day the same thing is repeated; this intense fire devours a world, and as soon as the sun sets, the moon rises, in its turn, over this infinite solitude. But every day, little by little, this silent desert encroaches on one's thoughts, invading and penetrating them as the strong light penetrates the skin; and one wishes to become a nomad, after the way of these men, who go from place to place without ever forgetting the customs of their country.

Every day the officer on duty sends a native soldier ahead to announce to the chief that they will all eat and sleep in his tent, enabling him thus to procure the necessary food for the men and beasts. This custom, which is equivalent to taxation in our country, often becomes a burden, from the way it is carried out.

Who says Arab, says thief, without any exception whatever. And this is what takes place: The chief applies to one of the leaders and claims this sum from his men. The leader pays; then the chief pockets the money and applies to another, who also pays. If he has an enemy, this man is made to pay also, when he in turn makes his men pay, too.

And this is how a tax that should cost each tribe twenty or thirty francs, invariably reaches four or five hundred. Nor is it possible to change this state of affairs, for reasons too long to enumerate here.

As soon as we near a camp, we see in the distance a group of riders coming toward us. One of them leads the party, and the horses walk or trot. Then, suddenly, they break into a furious gallop, such as our northern horses never could endure. It is the gallop of race-horses, sounding like an express train at full speed. The Arab almost stands on his stirrups, with his white garments floating behind and, with one jerk stops his steed, which all but falls on its knees. Then he jumps from the horse, advances respectfully, and kisses the hand of the officer. No matter what the title, origin, power, or riches of an Arab may be, he nearly always kisses the hand of any officer that he meets.

The chief remounts and directs the travelers toward a tent prepared for them. The general idea is that these tents are white and brilliant in the sunlight. They are, on the contrary, of a dirty brown, striped with yellow. They are woven of coarse hair from camels and goats, are always low (one can just stand up in them) and roomy. Posts, irregularly placed, uphold them, and the canvas is raised on all sides, so that the air may circulate freely. Notwithstanding this care, the days spent under these linen tents are intolerable; but the nights are delightful, and one sleeps wonderfully well on the thick and gorgeous rugs, even though these are full of insects.

Rugs constitute the only luxury of wealthy Arabs. They are piled one on another, in great heaps, and they are so highly prized that everyone takes off his shoes before stepping on them, as if at the door of a mosque.

As soon as his guests are seated, or rather lying on the ground, the chief orders coffee to be served. This coffee is exquisite, and still the recipe for making it is simple. It is crushed, instead of being ground, and with it is mixed a certain quantity of ambergris, which is allowed to boil in the water.

Nothing is more amusing about the repasts than the china possessed by these people. When a rich chief entertains, his tent is full of priceless hangings, beautiful cushions, and gorgeous rugs; but when the coffee is brought in, it is served in three or four cups badly notched, on a tin tray that looks as if it might have been bought at a cheap bazaar in Paris. These cups are of all sizes and manufactures,— English porcelain, imitation Japanese, common china, the ugliest and commonest specimens of crockery ever seen anywhere. The coffee itself is likely to be in a soldier's wooden bowl or a dented and worn tin coffee-pot that has seen better days.

They are a strange people; they have remained as childish and primitive as at the beginning of time. They pass on this earth without becoming attached to it, never settling down. As their dwellings are merely pieces of linen stretched on sticks, they possess none of those things that mean so much to us. They have no beds, no sheets, tables, or seats, not one of the little things that we consider necessary to our comfort. They have no household furniture, no trades, no arts, no knowledge of any kind. They hardly know how to sew goat-skins together, in order to carry water, and their ways of doing the simplest things are so primitive as to make one wonder.

Some of them do not know how to mend even their tents; and the holes in the brown linen are so numerous that the rain comes through at all times. They are not attached to the soil, nor do they care for life, these vagabond riders; they leave a large stone where lie their dead, any kind of stone picked up on the neighboring hill. Their cemeteries look like a field, where a house might have tumbled down, stone by stone.

Negroes live in cabins, Laplanders in holes, Esquimaux in huts; the wildest of wild men have a dwelling of some kind, below the earth or above it, as they cling to mother earth. The Arabs alone come and go, wanderers always, without any love for that earth to which we all cling, which we love with all the intensity of our natures; they always gallop by on horses unfitted for our labors; they are indifferent to our troubles, and ride madly away, as if they were always hastening to some place that they are destined never to reach.

Their customs have remained rudimentary, while our civilization has marched past them without affecting them in any way.

They themselves drink out of the goats' skins, but water is given to strangers in the most incredible kinds of receptacles. Everything is to be found here, from the iron stewpan to the tin can with a hole in it. I believe that if they were to get hold of one of our high hats, in some bazaar, they would save it to offer a drink of water out of it to the first general passing their way.

The cooking consists entirely of four or five dishes, not varied in any way. First comes mutton, which

has been roasted at an open fire. A man brings it in whole, carrying it on his shoulders, strung on a pole on which it was cooked; and the silhouette of this scorched animal up in the air reminds one of an execution in the Middle Ages. Its outline stands out at night against the crimson sky in a manner both sinister and grotesque, as it is held on high by this severe-looking personage draped in white.

The mutton is laid upon a flat dish made of braided *alfa*, in the center of the group of guests, who sit in a circle, Turkish fashion. Forks are unknown; each man uses his fingers, or carves with a small bone-handled knife. The wrinkled skin, which is crisp, is considered the daintiest morsel. It is torn off in long strips, which one crunches with pleasure, drinking muddy water with it, or else half-camel's milk and half-water, or some bitter milk which has fermented in a goat's skin and has acquired a strong taste of musk; the Arabs call this drink "leban."

After the *entrée* something that looks like a dish of vermicelli is brought in, sometimes in a small wooden basin or in some antique iron pot. This *potage* is composed of pimento (allspice), red pepper, and a mixture of apricots and dates mashed together. I would not advise a connoisseur to taste this dish.

When the chief's reception is particularly gorgeous, the *hamis* is served next; this dish is really wonderful. I will give the recipe for those who may care to try it.

It is made of chicken or mutton. After cutting the meat into cubes, it is fried in a little butter. Then take hot water (I should think broth would

improve it) and add a large quantity of red pepper, a dash of pimento (allspice), pepper and salt, onions, dates, and dried apricots, and boil this until the fruit is quite soft, when it is poured over the meat. It is simply delicious.

The meal ends invariably with the kouskous, the national dish. The Arabs prepare this by rolling flour between the fingers until it looks like gunshot. These granules are cooked in a particular way, and they are covered with a special kind of broth, of which I will say nothing here, for fear I may be accused of writing a cookbook. Sometimes, also, they bring little honey cakes, like puff paste, which are very good.

Every time you take a drink, the chief who is your host says: *"Saa!"* (your health), and you must answer *"Allah y selmech!"* which is equal to our "God bless you!" This formula is gone through ten times during one meal.

At four o'clock every day we settle down under a different tent; sometimes at the foot of a mountain, or again in the midst of some limitless plain.

As the news of our arrival spreads, one sees on all sides in the distance, from hill and dale, white specks advancing rapidly. These are Arabs, come to gaze on the military officer and to make known their claims. Nearly all ride horseback, very few being on foot; some ride astride small asses, with their feet almost touching the ground.

As soon as they set foot on the ground, they lie all around the tent, motionless and with fixed gaze, waiting patiently. Finally, the chief makes a sign and the complainants advance.

Every officer administers justice in a final and decisive manner.

The Arabs bring forward extraordinary claims, as they are the most quarrelsome, wrangling, and vindictive people in the world. As to finding out the truth and giving a fair judgment, that is out of the question. Each side brings an incredible number of false witnesses, who swear by the ashes of their fathers and mothers to the truth they asseverate. Here are a few examples:

A cadi (these Turkish judges are known for being mercenary to a degree) sends for an Arab and makes this proposition to him: "You will give me twenty-five *douros* [a *douro* is about five francs] and you will bring me seven witnesses who will swear in writing, before me, that X—— owes you seventy-five *douros*, and I will make him pay it to you."

The man brings his witnesses who give their evidence and sign it. Then the cadi sends for X—— and says to him: "You will give me fifty *douros* and will bring me nine witnesses that B—— [the first Arab] owes you a hundred and twenty-five *douros*. I will make him pay up." The second Arab brings his witnesses.

Then the cadi calls the first Arab B—— to appear before him, and on the sworn statement of his seven witnesses, makes X—— pay B—— seventy-five *douros*. X——, in his turn, brings his nine witnesses to prove that B—— owes him a hundred and twenty-five *douros*, which the judge compels him to pay. The judge's share in this transaction is then seventy-five *douros*, levied on both victims.

This fact is authentic. Notwithstanding this, the Arab seldom appeals to a French judge, knowing that he cannot be bribed, while an Arab will do anything for money.

They have an unconquerable dislike for our way of administering justice. Any written legal document frightens them, as they are extremely superstitious of paper, on which one may write the name of God, it is true, but might also trace some malevolent characters.

At the beginning of the French rule, when the Mussulmen found a piece of paper of any kind, they would raise it piously to their lips, bury it, or hide it in a hole in the wall, or even in a tree. This custom brought about such disagreeable results that there was an end of it very soon.

Here is another example of Arabian deceit. In a tribe near Boghar a murder was committed, and an Arab was suspected of being the guilty one, but proofs were wanting. In the same tribe at that time, was a poor man, who had come from a neighboring tribe to watch over some pecuniary interests of his own. One man came forward and accused him of this crime, another followed, and still another. Ninety of them came forward with positive proofs of his guilt, and the stranger was condemned to death and executed. Later, the man's innocence was fully proved. These men had simply wished to get rid of this stranger, who was in their way, and also to prevent one of their own tribe from being compromised!

Lawsuits last for years, without a single word of truth being spoken on either side. The only thing to

do then is to imprison both parties, witnesses included; they are kept in jail for a few months, and when released they will keep the peace for a year or so, when they begin again.

In the tribe of Oulad-Alane, through which we had just come, a lawsuit was going on that had lasted three years, in which time not a ray of light could be seen. Every now and then the litigants spent a short time in jail, and, on being released, they would begin their quarrel over again. They pass the greater part of their life in cheating and robbing and shooting one another, and only in cases where powder has been used do they keep clear of the courts.

From the tribe of the Oulad-Mokhtar a tall man applied to be taken to the French hospital. The officer questioned him as to his illness, when the man, opening his dress, revealed a horrible wound, an old one too, evidently. Asking the man to show his back also, the officer saw another dreadful hole, opposite the first one. On touching him slightly around the wound fragments of bones protruded. There was no doubt that the man had received a gunshot, and that it had penetrated and shattered the bones. But he denied it with the greatest energy, and persisted in saying that "it was the work of God."

In this dry country, however, wounds are not considered dangerous; festerings and gangrene resulting from the hatching of microbes do not exist here, as these bacilli flourish only in damp climates. Unless one is killed on the spot, or unless one of the vital organs is attacked, wounds usually heal.

We arrived next day at the tent of a chief called Abd-el-Kader-bel-Hout. This man was an upstart. His tribe, which he governed with wisdom, was less wild and quarrelsome than the others, but there may have been another reason for this.

The country here has water-sources only on the south side of the mountain, which is uninhabited, so that the water can be had only from wells which are common property. Hence there is no "diverting water from its course," which is a frequent cause of quarrel.

Here, also, a man applied to be sent to the French hospital. When asked what was the matter with him, he showed his legs, which were blue, weak, and flabby, with the flesh so soft as to retain the impression of a finger-mark, like mellow fruit. The poor devil showed every symptom of syphilis in its worst form. He was asked how he came to have such a disease; he raised his hand and swore on all his dead ancestors that it was "the work of God." Truly, this God of the Arabs performs singular deeds!

When all claims have been satisfied, we try to sleep a little in the intense heat of the tent.

Night comes and we dine. A deep calm settles on the charred earth. The dogs belonging to the soldiers bark in the distance, and the jackals answer their cries.

We lie on the rugs, staring at the sky sown thick with stars, which scintillate so brightly that they seem moist; and then we talk for a long, long time. Sweet memories come back, and are easy to relate, in these lukewarm, starry nights.

Around the officers' tent the Arabs lie on the ground; while, in a row in front, the fettered horses

remain standing with a guard over each one. These horses are not allowed to rest; a chief's horse must never be tired; as soon as one of them attempts to lie down, an Arab jumps up and compels him to rise again.

Night creeps on. We stretch at ease on the thick, soft rugs, and on waking suddenly we see white forms, as if wrapped in their shrouds, lying all about us.

One day after a ten hours' ride in the burning dust, as we neared camp, where there was a well of muddy, brackish water (which, however, we thought delicious), the lieutenant took me by the shoulders, as I was just about to rest under the tent, and pointing to the horizon toward the south, asked if I perceived anything.

After looking attentively, I answered: "Yes, a very small gray cloud."

The lieutenant smiled: "Well, sit down here and watch that small cloud."

When I wished to know the reason why, my companion added: "If I am not mistaken, that is a hurricane of sand coming this way."

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon, and the temperature was still 48° under the tent. The air seemed asleep under the oblique rays of the sun. There was no breath of wind, no sound, except that of the horses munching their oats and the whispering of the men preparing our meal, a hundred feet away from us.

It seemed, however, as if an additional heat was about us, a suffocating, concentrated heat, like that which oppresses one when near an immense fire. It

was not the burning breath, abrupt and repeated, the caresses of fire that precede the sirocco, but a mysterious overheating of all that existed about us.

I watched the cloud increasing rapidly, but only as clouds always do. It was now of a dirty brown, occasionally rising high in the air, and again spreading on all sides, as our storms sometimes do. To tell the truth, I did not see anything extraordinary about it.

Finally, it filled the whole of the south. Its base was opaque and black, while its summit was copper colored and transparent.

I turned, on hearing a great commotion behind me. The Arabs had closed the tent, and were fastening it down with heavy stones. Everyone was running, calling, or tearing about, with that frightened, excited look one sees in a camp when it is attacked suddenly.

It seemed to me that the sun was going down; I looked up and it was covered with a yellowish veil and seemed but a light stain, pale and round, about to disappear.

Then I beheld a most extraordinary sight. The horizon had disappeared, and a cloud-like mass was rushing toward us, swallowing everything as it came, contracting all things in sight, drowning every object.

I drew back to the tent instinctively, and just in time, for the hurricane, like an immense yellow wall, had just reached us. This wall rushed on like an engine at full speed and suddenly enveloped us in a whirlwind of sand and wind, in a storm of loose earth, burning, whistling, blinding, and suffocating.

Our tent, held to the earth as it was by enormous stones, shook like a sail, but did not yield. That of the soldiers, not so well secured, trembled for a few seconds and suddenly was torn from the ground, flew up, and disappeared in the moving mass of dust surrounding us.

Nothing could be seen ten feet away through this night of sand. We inhaled sand, we drank sand, we swallowed sand, our eyes were filled with it, so was our hair, and it filtered down the neck, up our sleeves, filling even our shoes.

This lasted all night. A burning thirst tortured us, but the water, the milk, and coffee, were all full of sand. The roast mutton was peppered with it; the kouskous seemed made of gravel, and the bread-flour was turned to powdered stone.

A big scorpion came to see us. These hurricanes, which suit these animals, bring them all out of their holes. The dogs of the tribe were not heard that night.

Next morning the storm was all over; the Sun, murdering tyrant of Africa, arose in all his glory in a clear sky.

We left a little later than usual, this inundation of sand having prevented us from sleeping.

Before us was spread the chain of the Djebel-Gada, which we were to cross. A defile opened to our right, and we followed the mountain as far as this passage, which we entered, to find ourselves in the midst of *alfa*, the horrible *alfa!* Suddenly we struck what looked like a roadway, beaten tracks where wheel-ruts could be seen. How strange to see a road here!

This is the explanation which was given me: An ancient chief of this tribe, wishing to imitate Europeans he had seen in Algiers driving in a coach, decided to build a road. This ingenious potentate took months and months to do this, compelling all his subjects to work like slaves. These poor wretches, without a pickax, shovel, or tool of any kind, digging most of the time with their hands, succeeded eventually in leveling several thousand feet of ground. This was enough to please their master, who promenaded through the Sahara in gorgeous equipages in the company of native beauties, brought from Djelfa by his favorite, a young Arab, sixteen years of age.

One must have seen this country, denuded and barren as it is; one must know the Arab, in all the gravity of his manner, to realize how comical must have been the look of this rake, this fashionable gentleman of the desert, driving about with barefooted concubines in a cart of unpolished wood, with uneven wheels, presided over by his boy favorite. This elegance of the tropic, this Saharian debauch, this attempt at *chic* in mid-Africa, must have been highly ludicrous.

There were a great many more men in our troop this morning. Besides the chief and his son, we were accompanied by two native riders and an old man who was very thin, wearing a pointed beard. He had a hooked nose, his back was bent, and his physiognomy resembled that of a rat, his eyes were so small and furtive. He was one of the chiefs of the tribe that disbanded when the leaders became extortionate. He joined us as guide, this part of the country being unoccupied even by Arabs.

We reached by degrees the top of the defile; for a time a high peak obstructed the view, but as soon as we rounded it I had the greatest surprise of all that I had experienced in this trip.

A vast plain spread out before us, and in it lay an immense lake, dazzling and blinding in the sunlight, whose limit we could not see. A lake in this country in the midst of the Sahara!—a lake of which I had never been told, of which no traveler had made a note! Was I out of my mind?

"What is this lake?" I asked, turning to the lieutenant.

He laughed and answered:

"That is not water, but salt. The illusion is so real, that everyone takes it for water. This salt lake, which is called here Zar'ez [the Zar'ez-Chergui], is about fifty or sixty kilometers long and twenty, thirty, or forty kilometers wide, in different places. These figures are approximate, of course, the country having rarely been traversed, and only by a party such as ours. These salt lakes [there are two] give their name to all the region, which is called the Zar'ez. From Bou-Saada, the plain is called the Hodna, after the salt lake of Msila."

I looked at this expanse of salt, glistening under the fierce sun. The whole surface, flat and crystallized, shone like an immense mirror or steel-plate; and our burning eyes could not bear the glare of this odd lake, although we were still twenty kilometers away from it, which seemed hardly possible so near did it appear.

We finally reached the foot of the Djebel-Gada, and arrived at that abandoned fort which is called

Bordj-el-Hammam, where we camped, after an unusually short ride.

This building, with its battlements, was erected at the beginning of the French conquest, to enable troops to occupy this part of the country in safety, should an insurrection take place; it is now almost in ruins. The outer wall is still in fairly good condition, and some of the rooms were habitable.

As on preceding days, all day long Arabs came to relate their grievances, real or imaginary, to the "officer."

A mad woman, whom no one knew, who subsisted in this dreary solitude, no one could conceive how, persisted in keeping near us. As soon as we stepped out of the fort, we found her invariably sitting in the most extraordinary attitudes.

Travelers of a poetic turn of mind have often written of the respect Arabs have for the demented. The truth is that in their own families they simply put them to death! Several chiefs, on being closely questioned, have admitted this. Sometimes these miserable idiots attain to a certain degree of sanctity, as they do in other countries besides Africa; but the custom is to kill them. And as the practices of the tribes are to us a sealed book, thanks to the system carried on by the great native chiefs, we have not even the slightest suspicion of what goes on in regard to this matter.

As we had traveled so little, I wrote the greater part of the night. About eleven o'clock, being very hot, I spread a rug in front of the door, in order to sleep outside under the clear sky.

The full moon, with its gleaming light, filled the space, and seemed to glaze everything it touched. The mountains, the sand, the horizon, that looked so yellow under the sun, seemed of a deeper hue still under the saffron light of the yellow moon.

Before me the Zar'ez, that vast lake of congealed salt, appeared incandescent. It seemed as if a fantastical phosphorescence emanated from it and floated above it; a fairy-like mist, so supernatural, withal so soft and captivating, as to keep me from closing my eyes for over an hour. And all around me, shining under the moon's caress, the Arabs lay wrapped in their burnous looking like enormous snowflakes.

We set out again with the rising sun.

The plain leading to the Sebkra was slightly inclined, sown here and there with *alfa*, thin and scorched. The old Arab took the lead and we followed him at a rapid pace.

The nearer we approached, the more complete was the illusion. How could this be anything but a lake? Its width, at our left, occupied the entire space between the two mountains, a distance of thirty or forty kilometers. We rode straight to its extremity on the right, as we wished to cross over the narrowest part of it.

But on the other side of the Zar'ez I could make out a low hill of a golden yellow, that seemed to separate it from the mountain. On our left that line followed the horizon along the edge of the salt lake; and on our right, where stretched the plain, bare and narrowed-in by the two mountains, I could still see that long yellow trail. The lieutenant said to me:

"Those are sand-dunes. This sand-bank is more than two hundred kilometers long, and it varies in width. We will cross it to-morrow."

The ground became like a crust of saltpeter through which the horses' hoofs sank deep. Grasses and reeds could be seen, and one felt that water was very near the surface. The plain, shut in between mountains, absorbing periodically the water from four rivers, and receiving the heavy showers of winter, would become an immense marsh, if the sun did not dry up its surface. Now and then pools of brackish water could be seen, from which some snipe flew away with that peculiar rapid movement of theirs. Then we found ourselves on the Sebkra, and we rode on that dried ocean.

Everything was white before us, of a silvery, snowy, vaporous whiteness. And even as we advanced on this crystallized surface, powdered with a salty dust, like snow, in which the horses sank as on thin ice, the impression still remained that the whole of this was water, after all. The only thing which might indicate to an experienced eye, that this was not a liquid stretch, was the horizon. Usually, the line that divides the water from the sky is visible; the one is always darker than the other. Sometimes, it is true, it all seems one, the sea taking on that tint of blue which, mingling with the blue of the sky, blends the one into the other. But by looking very intently one can always distinguish the line of the horizon, no matter how faint it is. Here nothing of the kind can be seen, as the horizon is veiled in a white stream, a milk-like vapor of an indescribable softness. And one looks for the terrestrial limit

now here in space, again too low, in the midst of the salt plain, where float the creamy mists.

As long as we were above the Zar'ez, we had a clear perception of forms and distances; when on it nothing in sight seemed real; we were enveloped in a constant mirage.

At times the horizon appeared to be at a prodigious distance; again, we perceived suddenly on this lake, which a minute ago seemed as smooth as glass, enormous fantastic rocks, giant reeds, or islands with steep banks. Yet as we drew near these strange visions they disappeared, as if by some contrivance, and instead of enormous rocks, we found only very small stones. The immense reeds proved to be only dried grass an inch high; the islands were merely light swells on the crust of salt; and the horizon, which we believed about thirty kilometers distant, was really about a hundred miles from us, obscured by the veil of trembling mist that rose from the burning layer of salt.

This lasted about an hour, and then we reached the opposite shore.

We found it at first a small hollow plain, covered with a crust of dried earth, sprinkled here and there with salt. Then we ascended a low hill; grasses now appeared and also a kind of reed, and again a small blue flower like a forget-me-not, growing on a thin, thread-like stem, and so fragrant as to perfume the whole neighborhood. This exquisite odor gave me the impression of a scented bath; we inhaled it for a time, and our chests seemed to expand as we drank in its freshness.

We perceived at last a row of poplars, grasses in-

numerable, more trees, and then our tents were pitched on the edge of the sand-dunes, whose undulations, eight or ten yards high, resembled sea-waves.

The heat was growing fierce, accentuated, no doubt, by the hot waves coming from the Sebkra (the salt lake). The tents, like steaming ovens, were unbearable, and on dismounting we started to find a little shade under the trees. We had to cross a forest of reeds. I was walking in front, and suddenly I began to shout and dance with joy, for I perceived vines, apricot, fig, and pomegranate trees, a series of gardens, at one time prosperous but now almost buried in the sand. These gardens belonged to the chief of Djelfa. No roast mutton for breakfast! What joy! No kouskous! Grapes, figs, apricots, instead! This fruit was not very ripe, but we ate it just the same. What a feast! even though we suffered certain ill effects from it. The water was very bad, as it was muddy and full of maggots. Needless to add that we drank very little of it.

We all plunged into the reeds and slept. A cold shiver came over me and woke me up suddenly,—an enormous toad had spat water on my face. The traveler has to be very careful in this country not to sleep in the first green spot he finds, especially where there is sand, for there are swarms of *léfaa* (horned vipers), whose sting is deadly, the death agony sometimes lasting less than an hour. This reptile is very slow and not dangerous, unless one steps on it or lies down near it. When meeting one of these creatures, if a person is careful and quick, it is easy enough to catch it if it is seized behind the head. I may add that I did not try to do this.

This small and much dreaded viper lives among the *alfa,* under stones, or in any sheltered spot. At first, when lying on the ground, one thinks of nothing else, then gradually one thinks less about it, and finally not at all. As for scorpions, we despised them; they are as common here as spiders at home. When we found one, we encircled it with dried leaves, to which we set fire. The reptile, mad with fear, would raise its tail, describe a circle with it, and sting itself to death. I was always told that it had killed itself, but I invariably saw it die in the flames.

This is how I came to see the *léfaa* for the first time.

As we were crossing an immense plain of *alfa* one afternoon, my horse gave signs of uneasiness. He would lower his head, snort, and stop suddenly, as if suspicious of every tuft of *alfa.* I am, I must admit, a very poor rider, and these abrupt jerks, besides filling me with fear as to my being able to maintain my equilibrium, would throw me violently against the pommel of my saddle. My companion, the lieutenant, laughed most heartily. Suddenly my horse gave a leap and kept looking on the ground at something I could not see. Thinking it wiser to alight than to wait to be thrown, I did so and looked around, but could see nothing but a small tuft of *alfa,* which I hit with my stick, when away slunk a small reptile into the next green tuft.

It was a *léfaa* (a horned viper).

The night of the same day, in a bare and rocky plain, my horse jumped to one side: I leaped down, sure of seeing another *léfaa,* but saw nothing. On moving a stone, an immense sand-colored spider,

moving rapidly, disappeared under a rock before I could catch it. One of the soldiers who had caught up to me called it a "wind-scorpion," to express its velocity probably. It was a tarantula, I think.

Another night, while I was asleep, something cold crawled over my face. I jumped up frightened, but I saw only the sand in the tent; all was in darkness, I could make out only the Arabs, from their white garments, as they lay asleep around me. Had I been stung by a *léfaa* or by a scorpion? Whence came that cold thing against my face? Very anxious to ascertain the truth, I lighted the lantern and prepared to strike the animal with my heel, when I saw a monstrous white toad staring at me. The horrible beast had wandered in my direction and struck my face.

In revenge, I compelled him to smoke a cigarette, and he died of it. This is how it is done: Its narrow mouth is opened by force and a piece of paper filled with tobacco is introduced, which is lighted at the other end. The animal, choking, blows on it furiously to get rid of it, and of course finally has to inhale the smoke. Then he blows again, inflating and gasping in the most comical way; but he must smoke on, unless some one takes pity on him. He usually dies from suffocation and is bloated like a balloon.

Strangers are often made to witness a Saharian sport, which consists of a struggle between a horned toad and an *ouran,* or large lizard.

We have all met in southern countries small lizards, with very short tails, running along some old wall. I often wondered what had become of their tails. One day, when lying in the shade reading, I

saw a viper spring from a recess in the wall and dart at a gentle little lizard sunning itself on a stone. It fled, of course, but the adder, being so much quicker, caught it by the tail, half of which remained between its teeth, while the poor little beast disappeared in a hole.

Well, this *ouran* is a sand crocodile of a species mentioned by Herodotus. It is a sort of large lizard, peculiar to the Sahara, and it treats the terrible horned toad as the adder treats the small lizard.

The fight between these two animals proved to be interesting. It usually takes place in an old soap-box. The lizard is laid in it, when it tears around, trying to escape; but as soon as the *léfaa* has been dropped out of a small bag into the box, it becomes motionless. Its eyes alone move rapidly about. Then it seems to glide slowly toward its enemy and waits. The horned toad, in the meantime, watches the lizard, scenting danger. Then suddenly it leaps, but the other is racing around so quickly as hardly to be seen. It attacks in its turn with surprising agility, and the toad opens its little mouth ready to bite to death, but the other flies past and in a second is out of reach at the end of the box.

This pursuit lasts fifteen or twenty minutes sometimes. The toad, exasperated, creeps toward its enemy, while the *ouran* rushes around always out of reach, quicker than sight, turns, stops, starts again, exhausting his adversary. Then, suddenly, it lands on its neck, and one can see only the toad, convulsed, strangled by the powerful jaws of the lizard, who catches it behind the ears, just as the Arabs do.

One thinks while watching the fight of these two

little animals of the bull-fights in Spain in some large arena. But it would be more dangerous to interfere between these small reptiles than to face the infuriated horned beasts of the ring.

In the desert, one often comes across a snake more than three feet long and no thicker than a man's little finger. In the neighborhood of Bou-Saada, this inoffensive reptile inspires the most superstitious fear. The natives assert that it will go through the hardest bodies like a gunshot, and that nothing can stop it when it perceives a brilliant object. An Arab assured me that one of his brothers had been pierced through and through by one of these animals, and that it had torn away the stirrups at the same time. Evidently the man had been shot at the moment he saw the snake.

Around Laghouat, on the contrary, this reptile is not feared, and the children often take it in their hands.

The thought of all these formidable inhabitants of the desert prevented me from sleeping comfortably; any rustling startled me beyond words.

The sun was going down, and I roused my companion and asked him to walk with me over the sand-dunes to try to find some horned toads or sand-fish.

The creature called sand-fish (the Arabs name it *dŵb*) is another kind of large lizard that lives in sand, the flesh of which is good to eat, so they say. We followed the trail of one without finding it. In the sand are also insects whose habits are peculiar. I refer to the ant-lions. They dig a funnel-shaped hole and settle in the bottom of it in ambush. As

soon as a spider or any other insect slips by on the incline, they throw a dash of sand up, blinding and stunning the victim, when it tumbles down into the hole and is devoured.

The ant-lion was for that day our sole recreation. Night brought back the roast mutton, the kouskous, and the bitter milk. When meal hours came round I often wished for home-made coffee.

Then we lay on rugs outside the tent, the heat being too great for us to sleep inside. And we had strange neighbors before us and behind us—the sand-dunes, or waves of sand, like a restless sea, and the level stretch of salt, like the calmest of oceans.

Next day we crossed the sand-dunes. It was like an ocean of dust in the midst of a storm, a silent tempest, with enormous motionless waves of yellow sand. They were as high as hills sometimes, uneven and heaving like billows, only larger and streaked here and there. On this raging sea, silent and motionless, the burning sun of the south poured down its direct and pitiless rays.

One must climb over these golden waves, tumble down on the other side, climb up again and again, without ceasing, without rest or shade. The horses gasp, fall knee-deep and slip when coming down on the other side of these wonderful hills.

No one spoke, as we were overcome by the heat and parched with thirst. It is said that sometimes in these valleys of sand one is astonished by a strange phenomenon, considered a sure sign of death by the Arabs.

Somewhere near, in one direction or another, the beating of a drum, the mysterious drum of the sand-

dunes, can be clearly heard. It beats distinctly, louder, then fainter, stops, and then begins again its fantastic roll.

No one appears to know the cause of this astonishing sound. It is thought to be the echo, multiplied and inflated by the undulations of the dunes, of grains of sand blown about by the wind and striking some dried grasses, as this phenomenon has always been noticed in the neighborhood of certain grasses that have been burned by the sun and are as hard as parchment.

These drum-beats, then, may be called a sort of mirage of sound.

As soon as we left the dunes, we saw three riders galloping toward us. When about a hundred feet distant, one of them dismounted and with a slight limp came to meet us. He was a man perhaps sixty years of age, rather stout (an unusual thing in this country), with a hard, deep-lined face, rather fierce in expression. He wore the cross of the Legion of Honor. He was called Si Cherif-ben-Vhabeizzi, chief of the Oulad-Dia.

He made us a long speech, inviting us to his tent to partake of a collation.

I entered for the first time the tent of a nomad chief. A pile of gorgeous rugs covered the ground; others were hung about to hide the torn places in the tent, and others again were stretched above our heads, making an impenetrable roof. Divan-like seats were also covered with precious stuffs; and a screen made of Oriental hangings divided one half the tent from the other, behind which the voices of women could be heard.

We sat down. The chief's two sons sat with him, and now and then he would rise and say a word or two over the screen to some one in the apartment beyond, when an invisible person would hand over a smoking dish, which the chief would offer us.

We could hear little children crying and playing about their mothers. Who were these women? They probably could see us through the apertures, but they were invisible to us.

The Arab woman, as a rule, is small, with a milk-white skin and the innocent look of a little lamb. She is modest only about her face. The working-girls have their faces closely veiled, while their bodies are covered only with strips of cloth, one falling in front and the other behind.

At fifteen years of age, these poor creatures become deformed, exhausted by hard labor. They work from morning till night, and go for water sometimes miles away, at the same time usually carrying a child on their backs. They are old women at twenty-five. Their faces, which are seen sometimes, are tattooed with blue stars. The wives of rich Arabs are seldom seen.

We left as soon as the meal ended, and reached the rock of salt, Khang-el-Melah. It is a strange looking mountain, gray, green, and blue, with metallic rays and peculiar ridges — a mountain of salt!

Waters, more salt than those of the ocean, escape at the base, and being volatilized by the intense heat of the sun, leave on the ground a white foam, like that of waves,— a foam of salt! The earth is not to be seen, as it is hidden under a faint powder, as if

a giant had spent his time grating the mountain to spread its dust about; and large rocks, broken off, lie in hollows,—rocks of salt!

Under this extraordinary rock, I was told, were very deep wells, inhabited by thousands of doves.

The next day we arrived at Djelfa. This is an ugly little French town, but it is occupied by charming officers, who made themselves very agreeable.

After a short rest we proceeded. We began once more our long journey through the barren plains. Now and then we met herds of animals. Sometimes they were sheep, the color of sand; or, far out on the horizon, we made out strange-looking beasts, who, with hunched backs, long outstretched necks, and slow movements, looked like a flock of giant turkeys. On closer view we recognized camels, with their sides inflated like a double balloon, or leathern water-bottles full to overflowing, as some of these animals are said to store within them thirteen hundred gallons of water. They, too, were of the yellowish color of the desert, like all animals born in these solitudes. The lion, the hyena, the jackal, the toad, the lizard, the scorpion, and man himself, are all of the same color, from the tones of fiery, yellowish red of the ever-shifting dunes to those of the yellowish gray of the stony mountains. And the lark of the plains is so much the color of dust that one can see it only as it flies away.

What do these animals subsist on in these arid countries?

During the rainy season the plains are covered with grass in a very short time; then the sun dries up all this vegetation in a few days. These plants

take on the color of the soil, they break, crumble away, and scatter on the earth like straw chopped so fine that one cannot distinguish the particles. But the herds of animals know where to find it, and they live on it. They go about looking for this powder of dried grass. They look as if they were eating pebbles. What would an ordinary farmer think of these peculiar pasture-lands?

We crossed a land where even birds are scarce, while wells were not to be found. We could see, in the distance before us, peculiar columns of dust that looked like smoke, running along the earth and ascending now and then. The ripples of the air, cup-like, raised and swept away these transparent clouds, and these were the only things to be seen in this mournful stretch.

Five hundred yards ahead of us, a rider guided us through this dull and endless solitude. He would walk his horse about ten minutes, motionless on his saddle, singing in his own tongue some mournful song with a strange rhythm. We copied his pace. Suddenly he would trot away, his body stiffened, standing almost erect on his stirrups, with his burnous floating behind him. And we all galloped after him, until, suddenly again, he would stop and go at a slower gait.

I asked my neighbor: "How can he guide us through in bare country without any compass whatever?"

"He always has camels' bones to follow," he replied.

True enough, every fifteen minutes or so, we came across some large bones, half-eaten by vultures,

burned by the sun, making a white spot in the sand. Sometimes it was a piece of a leg, or else a jaw at the end of a spinal column.

"Where do these bones come from?" I asked.

My fellow-traveler told me that the convoys, as they go through, drop by the way all animals not fit to follow, and the remains we saw were what the jackals had not carried away.

For days we continued this monotonous journey, always riding behind the same Arab, in the same order, always on horseback, almost without a spoken word.

One afternoon as we neared Bou-Saada, which we expected to reach that night, I made out a brown mass in the distance, the size of which was increased by the mirage. Its shape astonished me. On reaching it two vultures flew away. It was part of a man's body, still soft, notwithstanding the heat, and glossy with decayed blood. The chest alone remained, the other parts having been carried away, no doubt by the ravenous birds of prey.

"There are travelers ahead of us," remarked the lieutenant.

A few hours later we entered a sort of ravine, a defile, a burning oven, with rocks scalloped like sand, sharp-pointed against that pitiless sky. Another body lay here. A jackal ran away as we approached.

And again, as we came out on the plain once more, a gray mass, stretched out before us, made a movement, and I saw, as it slowly raised its long, outstretched neck, that it was the head of a camel. He lay there on his side, probably had been there two or three days, dying of fatigue and thirst. His

long legs looked broken, inert, lying on this fiery soil. And the poor beast, hearing us, raised his head to see us. His forehead, burned by the sun, was a running sore, and his eyes followed us about with a look of resignation. He did not utter a groan, did not even try to rise. One would think that having seen so many of his brothers die on such journeys, he knew the heartlessness of men. It was his turn and that was all. We passed on.

Looking back some time after, I could see the poor animal raising his long neck from the ground, still looking after us, the last living beings he would ever see.

An hour later, we saw a dog cowering against a rock, with his mouth open, showing his shining teeth, and watching intently two vultures, who were close by, picking their feathers while waiting for him to die. He was possessed by such fear of these patient birds, waiting for his flesh, that he never turned his head, nor did he seem to feel the stones the soldiers threw at him in passing.

Suddenly, on coming out of another defile, an oasis appeared before us. It is a sight not to be forgotten. The traveler has just crossed endless plains, sharp mountains charred and bare, without seeing a tree, a plant, or even a green leaf, and then suddenly before him appears a mass of dark greenery, looking like a lake of foliage spread out on the sand. Behind this green spot the desert begins again, stretching out infinitely as far as the horizon, where its line disappears into that of the sky.

The city slopes down to the gardens. What cities they are, those cities of the Sahara! An accumula-

tion of cubes of mud, dried in the sun. All these square huts of mud are huddled close to one another in such a way as to leave, between their uneven lines, only a narrow passage called a street, very much like a path made by the constant passing of animals.

In fact, the whole city, made of diluted clay reminds one of the dwellings of animals, of beavers, for instance, and of work done without tools, with only such weapons as nature gave the lower order of animals.

Here and there magnificent palms expand, some rising twenty feet from the ground. Suddenly we enter a forest whose aisles are inclosed between high walls of clay. To the right and left, date-trees spread out their umbrella-like leaves, sheltering their delicate fruit under the thick, fresh shade. Under the protection of these giant palms, waving in the wind like outstretched fans, grow grapes, apricots, figs, and pomegranates, and, best of all, the priceless vegetables.

The water from rivers is stored in large reservoirs, and distributed like gas in our country. Trustees keep a strict account of the amount used by each man, and it filters through trenches, an hour or two a week according to the size of the property.

Wealth is reckoned by palms. These trees guard the life, and protect the sap, of fruit-trees, and stand with their roots bathed in water, while their summit is scorched by the fiery sun.

The valley of Bou-Saada, which brings the river to the gardens, is of marvelous beauty, like a landscape seen in dreams. Covered with date and

figtrees and other stately plants, it slopes down between two mountains whose summits are fiery red. All along the river, native women, with veiled faces and bare limbs, wash their linen by jumping on it. They roll it up in a bundle, throw it in the running water, and beat it down with their feet, balancing themselves gracefully.

The river flows rapidly through this ravine. On leaving the oasis, it is still abundant, but the desert awaits it, the yellow thirsty desert, and absorbs it at the very garden doors, ingulfing it abruptly in its dried sand.

From the mosque, at sunset, the city looks most peculiar. The flat roofs of the clay huts look like a cascade of chessboards. On these the whole population may be seen moving about, as they all take to the roofs at sunset. Nothing can be heard, no one is to be seen in the streets; but if one can get a glimpse of one of the nearer roofs the greatest commotion appears to be going on. Supper is being prepared. Groups of ragged children crawl in the corners, while the Arab women, in soiled white garments, go about preparing the kouskous.

Night comes, and they spread rugs on the roof, shaking them first, as scorpions swarm in these huts, and the whole family sleeps in the open air under the twinkling stars.

Although small, the oasis of Bou-Saada is one of the most charming in Algeria. One can hunt the gazelle, which is to be found in large numbers. There is also an abundance of horned toads, and of hideous long-legged tarantulas, the shadows of which can be seen at night along the walls of the huts.

Considerable business is carried on at this village, as it is on the road to Mozab.

Mozabites and Jews are the only merchants, the only tradesmen, the only industrious beings in this part of Africa.

As we go further south, the Jewish race appears under such a hideous aspect as to make one understand the intense hatred of certain nations for these people, and even to explain the recent massacres. European Jews, Algerian Jews, all Jews that we know, that we come in contact with, our neighbors, our friends, are educated, intelligent, and some of them are charming men of the world. And we are indignant when we hear that a hundred Jews or so have been massacred or drowned in some little out-of-the-way, unknown town. I should not be surprised at this now, because the Jews here are very unlike the Jews at home.

At Bou-Saada they are to be seen groveling in filthy huts, bloated and fat, watching the Arab as a spider watches a fly. They call him and offer to lend him a hundred sous, in consideration of his signing a paper. The man knows the danger, hesitates, and says he will not. But the thirst for drink, and for other things, overcomes him. A hundred sous mean so much enjoyment!

He finally yields, takes the piece of silver, and signs the greasy paper. After three months he will owe ten francs, a hundred at the end of a year, two hundred after three years. Then the Jew sells his land, if he has any, or else his camel, his horse, or donkey, all he possesses, in fact.

The chiefs, military or otherwise, are equally in the power of these men, who are the plague, the

bleeding sore, of our colonies, and the great impediment to the civilization and well-being of the Arabs.

When a detachment of French soldiers makes an incursion into a rebellious tribe, a flock of Jews follows it, buying from them the spoils which they re-sell to the Arabs, as soon as the army disappears in the distance. If, for instance, six thousand sheep are confiscated in this country, what can be done with the animals?

Drive them to the city? They would die on the way, for how could they be fed, how could water be provided for them, while crossing two or three hundred kilometers of barren ground? Besides, it would require twice the number of troops to guard and care for so many animals.

Should they be killed, what slaughter, and what loss! The Jews being there, seeking to buy at two francs sheep worth twenty, they let the animals go, feeling that the treasury at least is richer by twelve thousand francs.

A week later, the first owners buy back their sheep at three francs a head. French justice is easily satisfied.

The Jew is master of all Algeria. One seldom meets an Arab who is not in debt; they hate to pay up, and prefer to renew their notes, at one or even two hundred per cent. They seem to think they will be saved if they can only gain time. A special law would have to be enacted to remedy this state of affairs.

The Jew, it has to be said, deals only in usury, employing the most dishonest methods, the real tradesmen are the Mozarabs.

On arriving at the village of the Sahara, one notices a particular race of men who have charge of everything. They alone have shops, selling European and local merchandise; they are intelligent, active, and commercial to the backbone. They are the Beni-Mozab or Mozarabs. They have been nicknamed the "Jews of the desert."

The man that lives in a tent, the real Arab, for whom work is a disgrace, despises the commercial Mozarab, but he comes at fixed intervals to get provisions from him; he confides to his care valuables which he cannot take with him in his roving life. A sort of compact exists between them.

Thus the Mozarabs have monopolized the entire North African trade; they are to be found in our cities, as well as in the villages of Sahara. Having made his fortune, this merchant returns to the Mozab, where he must undergo some cleansing process before he is allowed to resume his political rights.

These Arabs are noted for their small height, as they are smaller and broader than any other tribe; they have large, flat faces, thick lips, and eyes usually hidden under straight, bushy eyebrows. They are schismatic Mussulmans, and belong to the three dissenting sects of North Africa, and, according to learned men, they are the actual descendants of the sect of Kharedji.

The country to which these people belong is perhaps the strangest in all Africa. Their fathers, driven out of Syria by the army of the prophet, established themselves in Djebel-Nefoussa, west of Tripoli, in the state of Barbary.

Being repelled successively from every point in

these states, as everyone was jealous of their intelligence and industry, and even suspicious of them on account of their faith, they finally settled in the most arid, most desolate, and hottest part of the country. It is called Hammada (overheated) and Chebka (net) because it resembles an immense net of rocks.

The country of the Mozarabs is situated about a hundred and fifty kilometers from Laghouat.

Commandant Coyne, the man who knows the south of Africa so well, describes his arrival at Mozab in a very interesting way. He says:

"About the middle of the Chebka is a sort of circle, formed by a belt of glossy limestones, with an abrupt descent toward the interior. It is open on the northwest and the southeast by two trenches, through which flows the Oued-Mozab. This circle, about eighteen kilometers long by two wide, incloses five of the cities of the Federation of the Mozab, and the plots are made exclusively into gardens, which these people cultivate.

"Seen from the exterior, and on the northern and eastern sides, these rocks look like so many tombstones, in uneven rows; one would think the place a burial ground. Nature itself seems dead. No trace of vegetation can be seen, even birds of prey avoid these desolate regions. The fierce rays of the sun are reflected on the rocky walls, producing shadows in fantastic designs.

"Therefore great is one's astonishment, I might say enthusiasm, when, on reaching the crest of the rock, one discovers fine, well-populated towns, surrounded by gardens of a luxuriant growth, etched in dark green on the reddish bed of the river.

"Around one is the barren desert, like death; at one's feet are life and the visible proofs of a very much advanced civilization."

The Mozab is a republic, or rather a *commune*, like that which the Parisian revolutionists attempted to establish in France in 1871.

No one here is allowed to be idle; even the children, as soon as they can walk, help their fathers to

water the plants and care for the gardens, which constitute their principal occupation. From morning till night, the camels or donkeys draw with leathern buckets all the water needed to water these gardens, the system of irrigation being ingeniously arranged so as not to lose a drop of water.

The Mozab has, besides, any number of reservoirs for rain-water, in which respect it is very much in advance of Algeria.

The rain means happiness, plenty, an assured harvest, so that when it pours the people are wild with joy. They come out on the streets, discharge firearms, sing and run to the gardens, and to the river to see it flow, watching the trenches as they fill.

And these people by their constant labor, their industry and forethought, have made of the most wild and desolate part of Sahara a living country, well planted and cultivated, where seven prosperous towns are to be found. Therefore the Mozarab is very jealous of his country, and forbids, as much as possible, any European from entering it. In some of these towns, like Beni-Isguem, no stranger is allowed to stay one night.

They are their own police. No one would refuse to help to keep the peace, should such a necessity arise. There are neither poor nor beggars in this country. Nearly everyone can read and write.

There are a great many schools and public buildings. A number of Mozarabs, after staying in our cities a short time, return to their own home knowing and speaking French, Italian, and Spanish.

Governor Coyne's pamphlet contains a number of interesting details about these people.

In Bou-Saada, as in all oases and cities, the Mozarabs carry on all business that is done in the exchanges and shops of all kinds, and belong to all the professions.

After staying four days in this little town, we proceeded toward the coast.

The mountains we met on our way had a most extraordinary aspect. They looked like redoubts, with endless battlements. They are regular, square, and cut out as precisely as if by mathematical rule. The highest is perfectly flat and seems inaccessible. It has been called the "billiard table," on account of its shape. Some time before we arrived two officers had climbed it, a feat never accomplished before, and they found on its summit two enormous Roman cisterns.

## VIII.

### Kabylia, Bougie

We are now in the richest and most populous part of Algeria. The country of the Kabyles is mountainous, overspread with forests and fields.

On leaving Aumale, we descend toward the great valley of the Sahel. Opposite rises an immense mountain, the Djurjura. Its highest peaks are gray, as if covered with ashes.

Here and there on lower hills we see villages, which from afar look like piles of white stones; others seem to cling to the sloping hill. In the whole of this fertile country a terrible struggle is going on all the time, between Europeans and natives, for the possession of the soil.

The Kabylia is more densely populated than the most populous country in France. The Kabyles are not nomads, but industrious and hard-working folk. Therefore the Algerian does his best to dispossess them.

Here are some of the modes used to drive away and rob the poor native owners:

Any man leaving France can go to the official in charge of property in Algeria, and ask for a grant of land. The officer hands out of a hat a number corresponding to a lot, which in future will be his.

He leaves, and finds on reaching his destination that the land that has been assigned to him is in a village of natives, occupied by a whole family. These people have tilled and cultivated the ground on which they live—they have nothing else. The stranger expels them. And they go, resigned, since "It is the French law!" But these people, bereft of everything, betake themselves to the desert, where they become rebels.

Sometimes they arrive at an understanding with the newcomer. The European colonist, appalled at the heat and the appearance of the country, enters into negotiations with the Kabyle, who becomes his farmer. And the native, who is allowed to remain on *his own* land, must send, whether the harvest is good or not, a thousand, fifteen hundred, or even two thousand francs, to the European, who has returned to France!

Here is another method:

The Chamber of Commerce votes forty or fifty millions to be used in colonizing Algeria. What will be done with this money? Presumably, dams will be built and trees will be planted on the tops of mountains to attract rain, in order to make the plains fruitful.

Not at all. The Arabs are dispossessed. Now, in Kabylia land has increased considerably in value.

In the best parts it is valued at sixteen hundred francs an hectare (an hectare is two acres, one rood, thirty-five perches), and it usually sells for about one hundred and sixty dollars. The Kabyles live quietly on these lands. Being rich, they do not rebel; they only ask to be left in peace.

What happens, with fifty millions to dispose of in Kabylia, the loveliest country in Algeria? Well, the Kabyles are dispossessed in favor of unknown colonists.

But how is this done? They are paid *forty francs* an hectare, while each hectare is worth, at the lowest price, eight hundred francs! And the head of the family goes away, without a word (it is the law!), no one knows where, with all his people including the women and children.

These people are neither tradesmen nor manufacturers; they only know how to cultivate the ground. So that the family lives on the ridiculous sum that has been given them until it is all used up, when they become destitute. The men snatch up a gun, and follow some brigand, like Bou-Amama, which goes to prove that Algeria can be governed only by a military head.

They say: "We leave the natives in the fertile parts of Algeria as long as no Europeans ask for the land; but, as soon as they do, we dispossess the first landowner we come to."

"Very well, but when there are no more fertile lands to be had, what will you do?"

"Oh! well, we will fertilize, then."

"And why not now, when you have fifty millions to dispose of?"

How is it that, seeing that private companies build gigantic dams to give water to entire sections, and knowing that talented engineers could lay out sufficient land on which to plant forests large enough to attract water and to irrigate miles of surrounding country, they do not employ these means, instead of expelling the Kabyles?

It is only fair to add that beyond the Tell the land becomes so arid and barren as to be almost impossible to cultivate. The Arab alone, who can subsist on a handful of wheat and a few figs, can exist in this parched country. The European cannot make a living here. There are, then, but few restricted sections where colonists may settle, unless the natives are driven away, and this is what is being done.

In fact, apart from the lucky proprietors of the plain of Mitidja, those who have obtained grants of land of Kabylia, by the means I have just described, and also those who are settled near the sea, in that narrow strip of land bounded by the Atlas mountains, the colonists, in general are a poverty-stricken lot. Algeria can receive only a very small number of strangers — they could not make a comfortable living. Moreover, it is very difficult to govern this colony, for reasons readily understood.

Algeria is as large as any kingdom in Europe, and is composed of entirely different regions, inhabited by entirely different peoples. No government, so far, seems to have grasped this fact.

It requires a profound knowledge of each section to enable anyone to govern it properly, for every section needs laws, regulations, and provisions entirely different from every other section. Now the gov-

ernor, whoever he may be, is totally ignorant of all these details and customs; he must depend only on the reports made to him by his subordinates.

And who are these subordinates? Colonists? Men brought up in the country, who understand its needs? Not at all! They are all very young men who come here from Paris in the governor's retinue. We see one of these young ignoramuses governing fifty or a hundred thousand people, committing blunder after blunder ruinous to the country. What else could be expected?

There are exceptions of course. Sometimes the all-powerful delegate of the governor works hard; tries to learn, to understand. It would take him ten years to do so thoroughly. In six months' time, he is transferred; he is sent, for personal or family reasons, or others, from the frontier of Tunis to the frontier of Morocco; and having arrived there, he begins his administration with the same means he employed in the former place, confident that he has acquired valuable experience; and he proceeds to apply the same regulations and rules to people essentially different in all respects.

It is, then, not so much a good governor that is needed, but, above all, a competent staff.

An attempt was made to remedy this deplorable state of affairs and these disastrous customs by creating schools of administration, where elementary principles, necessary to the governing of the country, would be taught to young men. The project failed, however. The officials surrounding Albert Grévy made it come to naught. Favoritism won the victory once more.

The staff of these administrators is recruited in a peculiar way. It contains, no doubt, some intelligent and conscientious men. But when the government is short of capable candidates, it usually selects ex-officers who have held commissions in the native army. These, at least, know the Arabs well; but it is difficult for them to change their principles of administration with their change of costumes; and we should not, after discharging them as military officers, re-engage them to fill civilian positions.

Since I have allowed myself to touch upon this difficult question of the administration of Algeria, I must add a few more words on an important point, which should be immediately settled. It is that of the great native chiefs, who are in reality the all-powerful administrators of that part of the colony which is included between the Tell and the desert.

When the French first occupied Algeria, they invested with great authority over the tribes of a large part of the territory those of the chiefs who seemed to offer a guaranty of faithfulness. These chiefs were called military chiefs, or pasha chiefs. We could have done nothing alone, so we asked the help of native chiefs won over to our ideas, confident, however, that, in many cases, they would betray us, which they did frequently. The measure proved wise and politic; it produced, in fact, excellent results. Some of the chiefs rendered valuable services, and the lives of thousands of Frenchmen were saved, thanks to them.

But though a measure may be good at a certain period, it does not follow that it is perfect, notwithstanding all the modifications time brings in a country under colonization.

To-day, the presence in the tribes of these potentates, who alone are respected and obeyed, is a cause of permanent danger to us, an insurmountable obstacle to the civilization of the Arabs. However, the military party defends energetically this system of having native chiefs against the tendency of the civil authorities to suppress them.

I do not feel competent to discuss this question; but it would be sufficient for anyone to go among these people, as I did, to realize that it is all but impossible to alter the situation as it is at present. I will give a few facts.

It is entirely due to the chief of Saïda that Bou-Amama has resisted up to this time. In the beginning of the insurrection, this chief was sent with his men to join the French army, and he met, on the way, the Trafis, who were on the same mission. Together, they joined their forces.

The chief of Saïda was head over ears in debt, and it evidently occurred to him, during the night, to make a raid on the Trafis, whom he attacked with his men. Those who were beaten at first soon regained the advantage, and the chief was compelled to flee.

Thus it was that the chief of Saïda being our ally, our friend, and lieutenant, and representing French authority, the Trafis believed us to have had a hand in the attack, and, instead of joining the French army, they defected, and joined Bou-Amama whose strongest ally they became.

This is characteristic, is it not? And the chief of Saïda has remained our faithful friend. He marches under our banner.

There is, on the other hand, another celebrated chief, whom our military authorities treat with regard, because he has great influence over a large number of the tribes. Sometimes he helps us, again he betrays us, as it may prove an advantage to him. Openly allied to the French, whose authority he represents, he favors secretly all rebellions. It must be added that he forsakes either party whenever he has a chance to pillage. After taking an undeniable part in the murder of Colonel Beauprêtre, he is now allied to us. Moreover, he is strongly suspected of having taken part in a great many other outrages.

Our firm ally, the chief of Frenda, has often warned us of the double game carried on by this potentate; but we have turned a deaf ear to him because he himself renders us only interested services.

This particular position, and the openly-avowed protection guaranteed to the chief of Saïda, make him commit almost daily the worst crimes with impunity.

This is what takes place:

The Arabs all over Algeria are inveterate thieves, robbing one another continually. Never a night goes by but we are notified of twenty camels stolen here, a hundred sheep there, cows from near Biskra, horses taken from Djelfa. The thieves are never found, and still there is not a single official of the Arabs who does not know what becomes of the stolen cattle! They are taken to this chief just spoken of, this receiver of stolen goods. The animals are allowed to roam among his immense herds; he keeps a number of them for his trouble, returning the others after a while, when all danger of being discovered has passed away.

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No one in the south is ignorant of this state of affairs. But this man, to whom so much power has been given, is needed; his power is increased by the help he gives the freebooters, and we pretend not to see what goes on. And so this chief is immensely wealthy, while the Agha of Djelfa, for instance, is comparatively poor, as he has almost ruined himself trying to look after the interests of the colony, developing farms, clearing land, etc.

Now, besides these facts, disastrous things happen, which result from the presence of these native chiefs among the tribes. To understand this well, one must know Algeria as it is now. The territory and population are very clearly divided. There are, first, the towns on the seacoast, which have no more relations with those of the interior than any town in France has relations with this colony. These inhabitants are essentially peaceful; and they sometimes feel the after-effects of insurrections; but they have no influence over those occupying native territories.

The second zone, the Tell, is occupied chiefly by European colonists, and these see in an Arab only an enemy, from whom land is to be wrested. They hate him instinctively, pursue him always, and rob him when they can. The Arab pays them back in their own coin.

This aggressive hostility is the reason why the colonists have no civilizing influence over the Arabs. In this region things are not so very bad — the European element is eliminating the native element so rapidly that it will not be long before the Arab, ruined or dispossessed, will take refuge further south.

Therefore, it becomes absolutely necessary to see that these neighbors we have conquered keep the peace. To achieve this, we must exert our authority over them continually, and make them feel our power.

What is the state of affairs there to-day? The tribes, scattered over an immense territory, never see a European. From time to time, the officers from the Arabian bureaus perform a round of inspection, content with asking the native chiefs how things are going on. But the chiefs are under the military or pasha chiefs. If these are of good birth, and of an illustrious family respected in the desert, their power is unlimited. All the chiefs obey them implicitly, as they did before the occupation by the French, and nothing that takes place is ever known to the military authorities.

The tribes, then, are a sealed book to us, because of the fear and respect paid to the great chiefs, who carry out the traditions of their ancestors in making extortionate demands on their subjects. They are absolute masters, extorting from their followers a hundred sheep at one time, or sometimes two hundred, and acting the parts of tyrants. As they hold their power from us, what ensues is simply a continuation of the ancient policy carried out under the French *régime*, the hierarchical thieving, etc., including our being set aside and left in complete ignorance of the real state of the country. It is owing to this condition of things that we suspect revolts sometimes, but our suspicions are aroused only when the rebellions are about to break out. Hence, the presence of these great native chiefs de-

lays indefinitely the real and direct influence of the French authorities over the Arabs.

How can this be remedied? In this way: Nearly all these chiefs, except perhaps two or three, are much in need of money. It would be necessary to give them an income of ten, twenty, or even thirty thousand livres, according to their influence and the services they have rendered us, and then compel them to live in Algiers or in one of the cities on the coast. Certain military men assert that this would be the signal for war — they probably have reasons of their own to prove this. Others again, who live in the interior of the country, claim that this would be the only way to secure peace.

This is not all. These men would have to be replaced by civil officers who would live with the tribes, having absolute control over the petty chiefs. In this way, by degrees, civilization would penetrate into these countries, once these obstacles were removed.

But useful amendments are long in being achieved in Algiers as well as in France.

In crossing Kabylia I had a proof of our powerlessness, even over the tribes that live among Europeans. We were going toward the sea, following the long valley that leads from Beni-Mansour to Bougie. Before us, in the distance, a singularly dense cloud closed the horizon. Over our head the sky was of that milky-blue color it assumes in summer in hot countries, but farther away appeared a dark cloud with yellowish rays, which seemed neither a storm nor a mist, nor even one of those tempests of sand that blow like a hurricane, burying everything under

the gray dust. This cloud, opaque and heavy, almost black at the base and lighter as it rose in the sky, seemed to obstruct like a wall the whole of the valley before us. Then suddenly there was a faint odor of burned wood in the still air. But what giant fire could be the cause of this mountain of smoke? For it was undoubtedly smoke. All the forests of Kabylia were on fire!

We soon entered the suffocating semi-darkness, but could not see an object a hundred yards in front of us. The horses breathed heavily. Night seemed to have fallen, and a light breeze, which barely stirred a leaf, blew this floating darkness toward the sea.

We waited two hours at the nearest village to get some news; then our little carriage continued on its way in the real night, which had now spread over the earth.

An uncertain glare, though afar yet, lightened the sky. It increased rapidly, looking more blood-like than brilliant. But suddenly, at an abrupt turn in the valley, I thought I must be facing an immense city, all illuminated. It was an entire mountain, already burned, save the branches of the trees which had cooled, but the trunks of the elms and the olive-trees were still incandescent, like enormous coals, millions of them standing smokeless, like colossal lights on an endless boulevard, forming squares and winding streets, regular or uneven, as one sees from a distance in lighted cities at night.

We came nearer to the great furnace, and the lights grew more brilliant. During this day alone the fire had covered twenty kilometers of forest.

When we discovered the line of fire, I was terri-

fied, yet delighted at the same time at seeing the most terrible and thrilling spectacle I had ever beheld. The fire swept like a wave over an endless distance. It razed everything to the ground advancing quickly. The branches blazed and went out; but the tree-tops waved like torches in the air, while the trees themselves burned slowly, and the small flame of the bushes ran along rapidly.

All night long we followed this brazier, and at daybreak we reached the sea. Inclosed in a belt of odd-looking mountains, with dentated crests, strange and charming with their wooded sides, lay the Gulf of Bougie,—of a creamy blue, though clear, a blue of an extraordinary transparency,—rounding itself out under the azure sky.

At the end of the hill, at the left of the slope of the mountain, in a mass of greenery, the city tumbles down to the sea in a stream of white houses.

It gives as one enters it, the impression of being one of those pretty and improbable little cities seen at the Opera, cities we dream of situated in impossible countries.

It has Moorish houses, French houses, and ruins everywhere, the kind of ruins seen in stage scenery.

On arriving at the wharf, where transatlantic ships are moored, and where those boats whose sails look like wings are made fast in the midst of a seeming fairyland, the traveler sees a ruin of such magnificence as to seem unnatural. It is an old gateway built by the Saracens.

On the wooded hills everywhere are ruins, remains of Roman walls, of crumbling Moorish monuments, and buildings abandoned by the Arabs.

The day passed slowly and was burning hot, then night came, and we had a most extraordinary spectacle. As darkness set in, another light in the horizon seemed to replace that of day. The incendiary fire, like an invading army, surrounded the town. New fires, started by the Kabyles, appeared here and there, and were marvelously reflected in the calm waters of the vast gulf, surrounded by the blazing hills. The fire at times looked like a string of Venetian lanterns, or the writhings of a huge snake on the undulations of the mountain, or else it burst like a volcanic eruption, showing a dazzling core, or it resembled an immense torch, according as the fire burned underwood or tall old trees.

I remained six days in this flaming country, then left by that beautiful road which outlines the gulf and leads on one side along hills topped by forests towering above one another, and on the other side over apparently endless golden sands bathed by the quiet waves of the Mediterranean.

Sometimes the fire had reached the road and we were compelled to jump out to remove the burning trees fallen across it; again we galloped at the topmost speed of our four horses, between two waves of fire, one wave creeping down to a ravine where flows a torrent, the other climbing up to the summits, devouring everything and leaving the mountain bare. Hills, already burned, seemed covered by a black veil, like a veil of mourning.

Sometimes we crossed countries still untouched by fire. Anxious colonists standing in doorways inquired as to the progress of the flames, just as men asked in France, during the war, if the enemy were near.

Jackals, hyenas, foxes, and rabbits flew before the scourge, terrified by the approaching flames.

On turning into a small valley, we saw, suddenly, five telegraph poles loaded down with sparrows so heavily that the wires curved, forming between each post what looked like a garland of birds.

The driver cracked his whip. A cloud of sparrows flew away, scattering everywhere, and the thick wires, relieved suddenly, leaped and stretched out like a bowstring. They throbbed for some time, with long vibrations, dying down gradually.

We then reached the pass of Chabet-el-Akhra. Leaving the sea on the left, we entered the opening in the mountain. This pass is one of the grandest in the world. It narrows now and then; peaks of granite, bare, reddish, brown, or blue, come closer, leaving at their base but a narrow passage for the water; the road itself is nothing more than a narrow cornice cut in the rock above the torrent flowing below.

The appearance of this pass, which is arid, wild, and beautiful, changes every few minutes. The two walls inclosing it rise at certain places to a height of nearly six thousand feet; and the sun cannot reach the bottom of this well, except when it passes directly above it.

On reaching the other side of the pass we arrived at the village of Kerrata. The inhabitants, for a whole week, had been watching the black smoke issuing from the defile, as from a huge chimney.

The government of Algeria declared afterward that this disaster, which could have been averted with a little forethought and energy, had not been brought

about by the Kabyles. It was also said that the burned forests did not contain more than five thousand hectares.

A dispatch from the sub-prefect of Philippeville ran thus:

"I have been informed by the mayor and administrator of Jemmapes that the forests have been destroyed and that the douars (the vacated villages of Arabs) have been burned to the ground. The villages of Gastu, Aïncherchar, and that of Djendel have been threatened.

"In Philippeville all the trees have been burned. Stora, Saint-Antoine, Valée, and Damremont narrowly escaped being the prey of the flames. At El-Arrouch little damage was done, except to five hundred hectares burned in the douars of the Oulad-Messaoud Hazabra and El-Ghedir.

"At St. Charles about six hundred hectares were burned between Oued-Deb and the Oued-Goudi, and eight hundred hectares to the southeast and the southwest. Forage and huts destroyed. At Collo and Attia, the fire devoured everything.

"The lands Teissier, Lesseps, Levat, Lefebvre, Sider, Bessin, etc., are all or nearly all destroyed, also more than forty thousand hectares of woodland. Farms and houses at Zériban were destroyed by flames. There are a great many victims also.

"We buried this morning three zouaves, who died bravely in the discharge of their duty. The damage is very great and cannot be given, even approximately.

"The danger is almost over, for the reason that all forests have been destroyed. The wind has changed, and we hope to master the fire on the properties of Bessin, Collo, and Estaya near Robertville.

"I sent yesterday a hundred and fifty men to Collo, on a passenger ship, which I had requisitioned."

Let me add that the fire extended to the forests of the Zeramna, Fil-Fila, the Fendeck, etc.

Mr. Bisern, during forty years contractor of the forests of El-Milia, wrote as follows:

"My staff showed the greatest energy; twice it was in great danger, and twice it fought the flames successfully. But all this was in vain. While we fought the fire on one side, the Arabs relighted it on the other side, and in many different spots."

Here is a letter from a landed proprietor:

"I have the honor of notifying you that, during the night of Sunday, my farmer, Ripeyre, on guard on my property, situated above the drill-ground, saw four attempts at starting fire: one in the grounds of the commune, another a few hundred yards from my property, the third above Damremont, and the fourth above Valée. The wind having gone down, the fire happily did not spread."

Here is a dispatch from Djidjelli:

"DJIDJELLI, August 23, 3.16 P. M.

"The fire is ravaging the forests of Beni-Amram, belonging to Mr. Edouard Carpentier, of Djidjelli.

"Last night it was started at twenty different places; a laborer, returning from the mine of Cavalho, saw distinctly all the fires as they were started.

"This morning almost under the eyes of the Chief Amar-ben-Habilès, of the tribe of the Beni-Foughal, fire was set to the canton of Mezrech; and a quarter of an hour later it blazed also on another part of the canton, with the wind directly contrary. Finally, at the same moment, four hundred steps from where stood the chief and fifty of his men, another fire started, always with the wind in the opposite direction.

"It is evident that the fires were kindled by the natives, and at a given signal."

I must add, that, having myself spent six days in the burning country, I saw with my own eyes, in one night, fire burst forth simultaneously in eight different places, in a forest ten kilometers from the nearest house.

There is no doubt that if we were more vigilant these disasters, repeated every four or five years, would not happen.

The government seems to think it has done all it should, when, as the hot season draws near, it repeats the instructions given in Article 4 of the Statute of July 17, 1874, concerning the proper patroling of the forests:

"The natives, during the periods between July 1 — November 1, are compelled, where there are forests, under the penalties of Article 8, to exercise particular vigilance, each post being assigned by the Governor-General."

We suspect the natives of setting fire to the forests — and yet we confide them to their care!

This order was no doubt punctiliously carried out. Every native was at his post — only — he was the incendiary!

Another clause, it is true, orders a special watch on the part of the officer appointed each year by the Governor-General. This clause, however, is seldom, if ever, carried into effect.

Let us add that the Administration of Forestry, the most quarrelsome perhaps of all the Algerian administrations, does its utmost to exasperate the natives.

Finally, to resume the subject of colonization, the government, in order to favor the settling of Europeans here, has always antagonized the Arabs. And why should the colonists not follow an example, coinciding so well with their own interests?

It is fair to state, that, in the last few years, very capable men, experts in all questions of culture, seem

to have guided the affairs of the colony into a better channel. Algeria is prospering and producing under their *régime*. The population now works for the interests of France, as well as for its own interests.

There is no doubt that the land in the hands of these men will yield what it never would have yielded in the hands of the Arabs; the primitive population will also disappear eventually; this state of affairs beyond doubt will prove useful to Algeria, though it is disgraceful that it should be brought about under the present conditions.

## IX.

### Constantine

From the Chabet to Sétif is like crossing a country of gold. The grain, cut high, not mowed flat and trampled upon by herds of animals, as in France, blends its pale straw color with the reddening soil, giving the earth a warm tint like old gold.

Sétif is one of the ugliest towns to be seen. From there, we cross immense plains to Constantine. Tufts of grass, here and there, make it look like a table spread with trees out of a Noah's Ark.

And here we see Constantine, the phenomenal city, Constantine the strange, guarded by a serpent writhing at its feet,—the Roumel, the fantastic Roumel, which Dante might have dreamed of; a river of fire, flowing in an abyss of red, as if the flames of hell had lighted it. The city is made into an island by this jealous river-god; it encircles the place in a winding whirlpool, among glistening rocks, the walls of which are straight and dented.

The Arabs say that the city looks like a burnous, spread out. They call it Belad-el-Haoua, the city of the air, the city of the ravine, the city of passions. It overlooks beautiful valleys, filled with Roman ruins, with aqueducts made of giant arcades, overgrown with greenery. Above it are Mansoura and Sidi-Meçid, on the heights.

It stands on a rock, queen-like, guarded by its gulf. It glories in an old saying: "Blessed be your ancestors," it says to its inhabitants, "for building your city on a rock. Ravens build their nests high, but your nest is still higher."

The crowded streets are more full of life than even those of Algiers, as they are crossed and recrossed by Arabs, Kabyles, Biskris, Mozabs, negroes, veiled Moors, native soldiers in red, others in blue, solemn-looking kadis, and brilliant officers. Merchants walk next; their loaded asses, those little animals no higher than a dog, besides horses and camels, stride by with slow and majestic step.

Hail to the Jewesses! They are here and are very beautiful, of a charming though severe beauty. They go about draped rather than clothed, draped in gorgeous stuffs, knowing thoroughly the art of blending shades and colors in order to bring out their beautiful effect. They go about with arms bare to the shoulder, statuesque arms, which they expose boldly to the sun, as they do their faces, whose lines are so pure. But the sun seems powerless to hurt their polished skin.

The great attraction in Constantine is the crowd of little girls, the very little ones. Dressed as if for a fancy-dress ball, wearing trailing robes of red or

blue silk, with gold or silver veils on their heads, their eyebrows painted to form an arch over the eyes, their nails tinted, and the cheeks and forehead tattooed with a star, they trot about, with a hand in that of a tall Arab, their servant, staring boldly as they pass, conscious already of admiring glances.

One would think them a nation out of a fairy tale, a nation of little *femmes galantes;* for they look like women, these little girls, with their pretty dresses, their painted faces, and coquettish little ways. They attract like their big sisters. They are charming. One would say of them that they were a school of ten-year-old courtesans, seeds of love just coming to light.

We are now facing the palace of Hadj-Ahmed, which is said to be one of the most striking specimens of Arabian architecture. It has been praised by all travelers, some of whom have compared it to dwellings in the "Arabian Nights."

It would not be remarkable were it not for the interior gardens, which give it an Oriental touch. It would take a volume to relate all the atrocities, degradations, and infamies of the one who built it, with precious materials stolen and torn from rich dwellings in the city and the surrounding country.

The Arabian quarter of Constantine occupies half the town. The sloping streets, narrower and more tangled than those of Algiers even, taper down to the edge of the raging waters of the gulf, where flows the Oued-Roumel.

Eight bridges crossed this precipice originally, but six of them are in ruins to-day. There is now only one, of Roman origin, which gives a fair idea of what it must have been.

The river, here and there, disappears under colossal arches, built by nature. On one of these the bridge was erected. The natural vault, under which flows the river, is over one hundred and twenty feet high, and fifty-four thick. The Roman foundations are then one hundred and eighty feet above water, and the bridge itself was two stories high, two rows of arches superposed over the giant natural archway. To-day, an iron bridge, of one arch only, forms the entrance into Constantine.

We arrived at Bône, a pretty white town on the Mediterranean, reminding one of those on the coast of France.

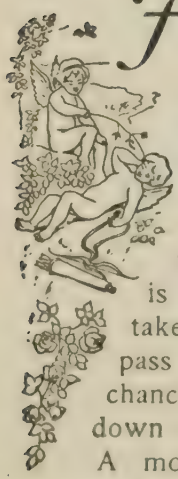
The "Kleber" at the wharf is getting up steam. It is six o'clock. The sun goes down in the distance behind the desert when the ship leaves.

And I remained on the bridge all night, with eyes turned toward the land disappearing in a crimson cloud, in the apotheosis of the setting sun, in a glory of pink sand, under the blue and tranquil sky.

## X.

### At the Seashore

* * * * * * *



*June 12, 1880.*—I am told I must spend a month at Loëche! Loëche, heavens! A month in that town, which is said to be the dullest of all seaside places! Did I say town?—why, it is a hole of a place, hardly a village! I might as well be sent to the galleys!

*June 13.*—I was awake all night, thinking of that trip I must make. There is only one thing for me to do. I must take a companion with me; it will help to pass the time. And this will also give me a chance to find out whether I can really settle down to married life.

A month of *tête-à-tête*, a month alone with the same woman, just we two, having long talks at all hours of the day and night! *Diable!*

Taking a woman for a month is not such a serious thing as taking her for life, but it is much more so than taking her for a night. I can al-

ways send her back with a few hundred louis, of course, but then, what would become of me alone in Loëche?

It will be difficult to make a choice. I will not have a flirt, nor a simpleton. She must not make me appear ridiculous, nor do I wish to feel ashamed of her. I don't mind if people say "the Marquis de Roseveyre is in luck," but I will not have them whispering: "That poor Marquis!" On the whole, I must find in this temporary companion the qualities I should expect in a life-partner — the only difference being that which exists between a new article and one borrowed for the occasion. Oh! well, I dare say it will be easy to find.

*June 14.*— Bertha! the very person. She is twenty years old and pretty, has just left the Conservatoire and is waiting for a rôle — sure of becoming a future star. Her manner is charming, she is witty and loving — a borrowed article that could easily pass for the real thing.

*June 15.*— She is free to come. Having no business or other engagement, she accepts. I have ordered her frocks myself, so that I know she will look well.

*June 20:* BÂSLE.— I will begin to write while she is asleep.

She is a dear! When she met me at the station, I could hardly recognize her, she looked so much like a woman of my world. There is no doubt that this girl has a future — on the stage.

Everything about her seemed changed,— her manner, her walk, her voice, her smile even,— she was irreproachable. She was dressed in the most charm-

ing and simple manner also. The change was so great, it showed such skill, such art, that unconsciously I came forward and offered her my arm, as a man would to his wife. And she took it with ease, as if she were really my wife.

Alone in the train, we were both quiet and dumb. Then she raised her veil and smiled — nothing more. Just the smile of a woman of the world. To tell the truth, I feared kisses, the comedy of love, that hackneyed game forever played by women of her kind. But no, she behaved herself most discreetly — I tell you, she is great!

We talked a little like newly married people, again like strangers. It was delightful. She often smiled when looking at me, and I felt at times as if I must kiss her — but, no, I controlled myself.

On the frontier an officer opened the door abruptly and said: "Your name, sir?"

I was rather surprised, but I answered: "Marquis de Roseveyre."

"Your destination?"

"The waters of Loëche, in the Valais."

He wrote this down. Then added:

"This lady is your wife?"

What could I do? What answer could I give? I looked at her, hesitating. She was pale and looked away from me. I felt it a shame to offend her needlessly — and then, she was to be my companion for a month.

I answered: "Yes, Monsieur."

Her blush made me feel very happy. On arriving at the hotel the proprietor handed her the register. She passed it to me, and I knew she was watching

me as I wrote. Once that page was filled, who would ever look over this book? I wrote:

"Marquis and Marquise de Roseveyre."

*June 21:* BÂSLE, *6 A. M.*—We are leaving for Berne. There is no doubt of my being in luck.

*June 21, 10 P. M.*—This has been a strange day. I actually feel excited. How ridiculous!

During the trip we spoke very little; she had to get up so early that she felt tired and dozed a little while.

On reaching Berne we wished to view the Alps, which I had never seen, and we walked through the town like a newly married couple.

Suddenly we perceived an immense plain, and in the far distance the glaciers.

From this spot, at such a distance, they did not look so very large, and still the grandeur of the sight chilled me to the marrow. A radiant sun was setting, and the heat was intense. The mountains of ice stood white and cold. The Jungfrau, the Virgin, overlooking the others, showed her white side, and all around her, raising their wan heads, were those frozen summits which the dying day showed clear and silver-like against the dark blue of the sky.

This inert and colossal mass made one think of a new and wonderful world, of steep regions, frozen and dead, but fascinating like the sea, full of mysterious charm.

The air that had blown across those frozen heights seemed to come to us over the blossoming country, different from that which we inhaled on the plains.

It was sharp and strong, savoring of inaccessible heights.

Bertha, enraptured, gazed without saying a word. Suddenly she took my hand and pressed it. I myself experienced that peculiar fever, that enthusiasm which takes hold of one at unexpected sights. I took her little trembling hand and carried it to my lips; and I believe I actually kissed it with affection. I was quite upset. But by whom? By her, or by the glaciers?

*June 24:* Loëche, *10 P. M.*—The whole trip was delightful. We spent half a day at Thun, gazing at the rough outline of the mountains we were to cross the next day.

At sunrise we crossed a lake, probably the most beautiful lake in Switzerland. Mules awaited us, we mounted them and started. After breakfasting in a little town we began the ascent, entering slowly the wooded pass, climbing upward.

Here and there, on steep hills, we could distinguish white spots; they were Swiss cottages, built here one wonders how! We crossed torrents, and saw, far up, between summits covered with pines, an immense pyramid of snow seeming so near that we could reach it in twenty minutes, although in reality it was distant twenty-four hours' travel.

Sometimes we crossed narrow plains littered with broken rocks, as if two mountains had come in collision in this arena, leaving on the battle-field their limbs of granite.

Bertha, exhausted, tried hard to keep her eyes open. Finally she slept, and I supported her with one arm, happy to do so, pleased to feel her so close

to me. Night came and we still climbed up. We stopped before the door of a little inn buried in the mountain.

We slept, oh! how we slept that night!

At daybreak I ran to the window and uttered a cry. Bertha joined me, and she too was surprised and delighted. We had slept amid the snows. All around us enormous hills whose gray tones showed through the mantle of snow, hills without pines, mournful and icy, rose so high that they seemed inaccessible.

An hour after starting again we perceived at the bottom of this funnel of stone and snow, a dark, gloomy lake without a ripple, which we followed for some time. A guide brought us a few edelweiss, the pale flowers of the glaciers. Bertha put them in her belt.

Suddenly the pass opened before us, disclosing the horizon — the whole chain of the Piedmontese Alps beyond the valley of the Rhône. The high summits, here and there, overlooked the smaller mountains. There was Mount Rose, solemn and heavy; the Cervin, the tall pyramid, where so many men have found death; the Dent-du-Midi, and a hundred other white points shone like diamonds in the sunlight.

The path we followed stopped abruptly on the edge of a precipice, and in the dark chasm, six thousand feet deep, inclosed between four walls of upright, dark, threatening granite, we saw, on a stretch of verdure, white spots that looked like sheep in a field. They were the houses of Loëche.

We had to leave our mules and walk, the road being dangerous. The path runs along the rock,

turns, comes and goes, always overlooking the precipice, and as we drew near the village, it grew larger and larger. This is called the pass of the Gemmi, one of the most beautiful passes of the Alps.

Bertha leaned on me, crying out with joy and fear, happy and timid, like a child. Once when we were a few feet behind the guides, and hidden by a rock, she kissed me—I held her close to me—

I had thought that when we reached Loëche I would let everyone understand that she was not my wife. But everywhere I had treated her as such, everywhere she had passed for the Marquise de Roseveyre; I could not now treat her differently. She would have been hurt, and truly she was charming.

So I said to her: "My dear friend, you bear my name, I am supposed to be your husband; I hope you will act toward everyone with great discretion. Don't make any acquaintances, don't talk and make friends with anyone. Better let them think you proud than have me regret what I have done."

She answered: "Don't be afraid, my dear René."

*June 26.*—Loëche is not by any means dull. It is wild, but very beautiful. That wall of granite, six thousand feet high, from which flow a hundred streams like ribbons of silver; that constant murmur of running water; this village buried in the Alps where one looks up to see the sun crossing the heavens, the neighboring glacier, so white in the distance, this valley overflowing with streams, full of trees, of freshness, of life, flowing down toward the Rhône, and showing on the horizon the snowy tops of the Piedmont, all this enchants and captivates me. I wonder—if Bertha were not here!—

She is perfect, this child, more reserved and *distinguée* than any here. I hear people say: "How pretty she is, that little Marquise!"

*June 27.*—My first bath. We go directly from the house into the bathing-machine, where twenty bathers dip in their woolen garments, men and women together. Some are eating, others reading or talking. We put small floating tables before us. Some play hide and seek, which is not always entirely proper. Seen from the galleries surrounding the bath, we look like enormous toads in the water.

Bertha sat in the gallery with me for a while after my bath. She was very much looked at.

*June 28.*—Second bath. Four hours in the water. In a week's time I shall have to stay eight hours. My companions in diving are the Prince of Vanoris (Italy), Count Lovenberg (Austria), Baron Samuel Vernhe (Hungary or elsewhere), besides fifteen or so other men less distinguished, but all nobles. Everyone is of noble birth at the seashore. They all ask in turn to be introduced to Bertha. I answer: "Yes"; and then manage to slip away. They think I am jealous; how amusing!

*June 29.*—The Princess de Vanoris came up to us as we were going back to the hotel, and asked me to introduce her to my wife, which I did, of course, but I begged Bertha not to keep up the acquaintance.

*July 2.*—The Prince insisted on our going to his rooms yesterday, to take tea with some of his friends. Bertha certainly looked prettier and more attractive than any of the women there—what can I do?

*July 3.*—After all, who cares? Among these thirty noblemen, are there not at least ten with assumed

names? Among the sixteen or seventeen women, how many are really married, twelve perhaps; and out of the twelve, are there six who are irreproachable? So much the worse for them; I'm not to blame,—they insisted on knowing Bertha.

*July 10.* Bertha is the queen of Loëche! They are all wild about her; they all make so much of her, worshiping her. She is truly charming, so graceful and *distinguée.* The men envy me!

One day the Princess de Vanoris said: "Do tell me, Marquis, where did you find such a treasure?"

I was tempted to answer her: "First prize at the Conservatoire, comedy class, engaged at the Odéon, but free again after the fifth of August, 1880!"

Heavens! I wish I could see how she would have looked if I had said that!

*July 20.* Bertha is truly wonderful! Not once has she made a mistake, nor has she wanted in tact on any occasion; I am amazed!

* * * * * * *

*August 10*: PARIS. It is all over—I feel very blue. The day before we left I thought everyone would weep.

We decided to go to see the rising of the sun on the Torrenthorn before leaving. We rode on mules at midnight with guides carrying lanterns, and the long caravan wound in and out in the mountain paths of the pine forest. We crossed pasture-lands, where cows graze at will, and finally reached the stony region where no more grass can be seen.

Sometimes, in the darkness, we could distinguish a white mass of snow piled high in a recess in the mountain.

The air was very keen, biting the eyes and skin. The wind dried our throats, bringing with it the frozen breath of a hundred leagues of icy peaks.

It was midnight when we reached the top. The provisions were unpacked, so that we could drink champagne on first seeing the rising sun.

The sky grew lighter. We could see an abyss at our feet, and another peak a few hundred yards away.

The horizon seemed to turn livid, but without our being able to see anything in the distance.

Then, gradually, on the left we saw the summit of the Jungfrau, another peak, and again another. They appeared, each in turn, as if rising with the light of day. And we were astonished to find ourselves in the midst of these giants, in this desolate country of eternal snow. Suddenly, in front of us, the long chain of the Piedmont unfolded itself. Other mountains appeared in the north. It was, in truth, the immense country of great hills, with icy foreheads, from the Rhindenhorn to the ghost-like patriarch of the Alps, Mont Blanc. Some were tall and straight, others cowered low, others again looked deformed; but all were equally white, as if the Creator had thrown a cloth of immaculate whiteness on the hunchbacked earth.

Some of the mountains seemed near enough for us to leap upon; others were so far that we could hardly distinguish them.

The sky reddened, and all the peaks blushed. The clouds seemed to bleed on them. It was superb, almost fearful. But soon the flaming heavens paled and the whole army of peaks turned pink, a pale pink, like the gown of a young girl.

The sun appeared above the napkin of snow. And immediately the glaciers became white, with a dazzling whiteness, as if the horizon were filled with domes of silver.

The women, enraptured, looked on. They started when a champagne cork flew off; and the Prince de Vanoris presented a glass to Bertha, saying: "I drink to the Marquise de Roseveyre!"

All cried out: "I drink to the Marquise de Roseveyre!"

She raised herself on her mule and answered: "I drink to all my friends!"

Three hours later we took the train for Geneva, in the valley of the Rhône. We were no sooner alone than Bertha, so gay and happy a little while ago, burst out crying, burying her face in her hands.

I fell on my knees: "What is it? What is the matter? Tell me, do."

She stammered through her tears: "It is — it is — it is all over, this being an honest woman!"

And — I came very, very near committing a great blunder, but I did not!

I left Bertha as soon as we reached Paris, afraid of my own weakness if I stayed with her much longer.

(The journal of the Marquis of Roseveyre is not of much interest for the next two years. However, we find, dated July 20, 1883, the following):

*July 20, 1883*: FLORENCE.— Sad memories came back to me to-day. I was walking in the Cassines, when a carriage stopped near me and a lady called me by name: It was the Princess de Vanoris.

"Oh! Marquis, my dear Marquis," she cried "I

am so glad to see you. How is your wife? I do think she was the most charming woman I ever have met."

I was taken aback, not knowing what to say, and with a strange feeling in my heart I stammered: "I beg of you not to speak of her, Princess, I lost her three years ago."

She took my hand in hers. "Oh! my dear friend, how I feel for you!"

She then left me. I went in, sad and discontented, as when I had left Bertha. Fate often makes mistakes! How many so-called honest women were born to be women of the street, and prove it! Poor Bertha! How many others were born to be honest — And she — well! — I must forget her.

## XI.

### In Brittany

This is the season for traveling, the bright season, when one loves new horizons, the vast expanse of blue sea which rests the eye and calms the soul, the fresh wooded valleys, where one feels sad without cause. In such a season, I was sitting one night on a grassy bank, watching at my feet a little pool of water in which the rays of the setting sun were reflected.

I love to walk in worlds which I pretend to myself are unknown to anyone else, I love the sudden wonder that takes hold of me on finding customs I knew nothing of, I love that constant interest in everything new, the joy of seeing, the awakening of thought.

But one thing, only one, spoils these charming explorations for me: the reading of guidebooks. Written by traveling clerks, with odious and false descriptions, directions invariably wrong, indicating imaginary roads, they are, with the exception of one

(an excellent German guide), the comfort of tradesmen on a pleasure trip, and the despair of real travelers who go, with knapsack on back, walking-stick in hand, up and down unknown paths, deep in ravines, or strolling along beaches.

These books lie; their writers know nothing, they understand nothing, they disfigure by their stupid and emphatic prose the most delightful country; they know only the main road and their books are of no more value than those maps made by the military staff upon which certain dams of the Seine, made thirty years ago, are not yet recorded.

And yet, how pleasant to know in advance the country one will go through! What happiness when one finds a book in which some wanderer relates his impressions! Sometimes it gives one only a faint idea of the places to be seen, again it gives more. When penetrating Algeria, as far as the oasis of Laghouat, the traveler may probably read every day and at all hours of the day the admirable book written by Fromentin, "A Summer in the Sahara." This book will open the eyes and the mind, and lighten up these plains and mountains, these burning solitudes — it reveals the very soul of the desert.

There are everywhere in France unknown and charming spots. Without attempting to make a new guidebook, I would like, now and then, to point out short excursions, ten or twelve-day trips, familiar to all pedestrians, but unknown to tourists in general.

Never following the highroad, always walking in bypaths, sleeping in haylofts, when there are no inns near, eating bread and drinking water where no other food is to be had, having no fear of rain or of

long regular marches,—this is the only way to explore and enjoy a country thoroughly and to discover a thousand things one had never imagined.

Among other provinces of France, Brittany is the most remarkable; one can never understand it in ten days, for every country, like every man, has its peculiarities.

We will go from Vannes to Douarnenez, following the coast, that coast of Brittany, solitary and low, strewn with dangerous rocks, where the waters roar as if in answer to the whistling wind on the moor.

The Morbihan, a sort of inland sea, heaving under the rising tide of the near-by ocean, stretches out before the harbor of Vannes. One must cross it to reach the open sea.

It is full of islands, Druidic islands, mysterious and haunted. These are covered with tumuli, menhirs, and dolmens (long blocks and tables of stone), all those strange rocks which appear like the statues of gods. These islands, according to the natives, are as numerous as the days in the year. The Morbihan is a symbolical sea, trembling with superstition.

Therein lies the great charm of this country, it is the hotbed of legends. Dead everywhere else, they live here, rooted in the soil like granite. The old-time stories also are eternal, and the peasant relates adventures fifteen centuries old, as if they had happened yesterday, and as if his father or grandfather had witnessed them.

There are subterranean passages where the dead remain intact, as on the day death struck them motionless, their blood alone having dried up. And so memories live eternally in this corner of France—

memories, and even the manner of thought, of remote ancestors.

I left Vannes, on the same day I arrived, to visit a historical castle, Sucinio, and from there gained Locmariaker, then Carnac, and, following the coast, Pont-l'Abbé, Penmarch, the Pointe du Raz, and Douarnenez.

The road, at first, ran along the Morbihan, then led across a limitless moor, cut here and there by ditches full of water, and without a house, a tree, or a living thing, covered with reeds shivering and whistling in a raging wind, with clouds sweeping by, which seemed to groan.

A little further I crossed a small hamlet, where three men, and a buxom girl of twenty wandered about; then I went on again, seeing nothing but the bare land, marshy and deserted, reaching to the sea, whose gray line, lightened sometimes by a gleam of foam, stretched out on the horizon.

In the midst of this wild scene rose a tall ruin; a square castle, flanked with towers, stood there alone, between these two deserts, the moor and the sea. This old manor of Sucinio, which dates from the thirteenth century, is famous. There was born the great Chevalier de Richemont who recovered France from the English.

There are no doors to it. I entered a vast courtyard where the broken turrets have fallen in a heap of stones; and what with climbing remnants of staircases, scaling broken walls, holding on by creeping ivy, anything my hand could lay hold of, I finally reached the summit of a tower, from which it appeared that I could see all Brittany.

Facing me, beyond an uncultivated plain, was the ocean, roaring under a dark sky; and everywhere was the moor. At the right appeared the sea of the Morbihan, with its torn banks, and farther beyond it, barely visible, a white spot illuminated Vannes, lighted up by a ray of sun peeping out between two clouds. And further away still, a large cape loomed out—Quiberon!

All this is dreary, melancholy, heartbreaking. The wind moans across these lonely stretches; this is truly a haunted country; and in the walls, the whistling reeds, the stagnant ditches, I imagined I could feel legendary creatures prowling about.

Next day I crossed Saint-Gildas, where the ghost of Abélard seems to wander. At Port Navalo, the sailor who took me across the strait told me about his father, who was a Chouan (an unorganized Legitimist soldiery who carried on a kind of guerrilla-warfare in Brittany in 1793); about his oldest brother, also a Chouan; his uncle the curé, another Chouan, all three dead—and his outstretched hand pointed to Quiberon.

At Locmariaker, I entered the country of the Druids. A native showed me the table of Cæsar, an immense block of granite, supported by colossal columns, and he spoke to me of Cæsar as if he had known him personally.

At last, still following the coast between the moor and the ocean, I saw before me the granite fields of Carnac.

They look fairly alive, these stones, standing in straight lines; giant blocks, some of them, and others quite small, all square, long, and flat, looking like thin elongated bodies, or short stout ones. After

one has looked at them for some time they seem to move and bend, to have life!

One is easily lost among them; a wall interrupts these masses of granite, after leaping over which this strange procession is seen again, set in rows as regular as soldiers at drill, as appalling as specters. The sight makes one's heart beat; the mind becomes excited, and goes back through ages and is lost in superstitious beliefs.

As I stood motionless, surprised and delighted, a noise behind me gave me such a start that I turned abruptly; an old man, dressed in black, with a book under his arm, bowed to me, saying: "You are visiting our Carnac?" I told him of my enthusiasm and the fright he had given me. He added: "Here, my dear sir, the atmosphere is so full of legends that one gets frightened without cause. For five years I have been studying these stones; nearly all have a secret, and I sometimes think they also have souls. When I get back to my boulevard, I smile at my own foolishness; but, when I return here, I am a believer, an unconscious believer, without any particular religion, believing them all." And, striking the ground with his foot, he added: "This is a religious country; one must never jest with departed creeds; for nothing ever dies. We are with the Druids, sir; let us respect their beliefs!"

The red sun disappearing in the sea bathed the stones as if with blood. The old man smiled:

"You can imagine what strength these beliefs possess here, when I tell you that I myself have had a vision! What am I saying? It was a true apparition! There, on that dolmen, one night about this

hour, I distinctly saw the enchantress Koridwen boiling the miraculous water."

I interrupted him, saying that I did not know the enchantress.

He was indignant.

"What! you do not know the wife of the god Hu, and the mother of the goblins?"

"No, I confess I do not. If it is a legend, by all means tell me about it."

We sat on one of the rocks, and he spoke thus:

"The god Hu, the father of the Druids, had for a wife the enchantress Koridwen. She gave him three children, Mor-Vrau, Creiz-Viou, a girl, the most beautiful girl in the world, and Aravik-Du, the most hideous being ever born.

"Koridwen, in her motherly love, wished to bestow some gift on the monster, and she resolved to make him drink the water which gives the power of divination.

"This water had to boil during a whole year. The enchantress confided the care of the vase containing it to the blind Morda and the dwarf Gwiou.

"The year had almost come to an end, when the two watchers, becoming laxing in their vigilance, allowed a little of the liquid to overflow, and three drops fell on the dwarf's hand, who, carrying these to his lips and tasting them, knew the future instantly. The vase then broke of itself, and, Koridwen appearing, Gwiou, afraid of her anger, ran away.

"She pursued him, and in order not to be caught he changed himself into a hare; but immediately the enchantress turned into a hound and darted after him. She was just about to catch him, on the edge of a

river, when he became a fish and threw himself into the water. Then an enormous otter followed him so closely that, to escape it, he turned himself into a bird. A huge hawk then appeared in the sky, with outstretched wings and open beak; it was Koridwen again; and Gwiou, shivering with fright, became a grain of corn and dropped on a speck of wheat.

"Then a black hen, running up, swallowed the grain. Koridwen, feeling that she had had her revenge, was resting, when she felt she was about to become a mother.

"The grain of corn had germinated within her; and a child was born, which she abandoned on the river in a wicker cradle. But the child, rescued by the son of the King Gouydno, became a genè, the spirit of the moor, the goblin! So it is from Koridwen that come all the fantastic little beings, the dwarfs and gnomes that haunt these stones. They live in holes beneath them, it is said, coming out only at night to dart among the furze. Remain here some time, sir, in the midst of these haunted monuments; look attentively at a dolmen, lying on the ground, and you will soon feel the earth trembling; you will see the stone move, and will shiver with fear on seeing the head of a gnome staring at you, as he raises the block of granite with his forehead. Now, let us go and have dinner."

The night had come, moonless, quite dark, full of murmuring wind. With hands outstretched before me, I tried to keep clear of the rocks; and what with this tale, the strange country, and my somewhat confused thoughts, I should not have been surprised if a goblin had brushed past me.

The next day I started again, crossing moors, villages, and towns, Lorient, the pretty little valley of Quimperlé, and Quimper itself.

The highway leaves Quimper, climbs a hill, cuts through valleys, passes a small lake full of weeds, and finally reaches Pont-l'Abbé, the oddest little town of all the odd towns of Brittany from the Morbihan to the Pointe-du-Raz.

At the entrance, an old castle, flanked with towers, stands with its walls deep in a gloomy pool, where fly wild birds. A river flows from this place, on which coasters can row up to the city. In the narrow streets the men wear hats with enormous brims, jackets heavily embroidered, and four waistcoats, one over another. The first, no larger than the hand, barely covers the shoulder blades, and the last comes down far below the waist.

The women are tall, ruddy, and good-looking, and they wear tight cloth jackets that compress the bosom. Their headdress is peculiar: on the temples, two bands, embroidered in colors, frame the face, drawing back the hair, which is then piled on the head under a singular-looking cap, often woven with gold and silver threads.

The road leads away from this little ancient town of the Middle Ages, lying here apparently forgotten. It creeps on through the moorland. Now and then, I saw three or four cows, invariably accompanied by a sheep, grazing by the roadside. For days and days I came upon these groups, and I began to wonder why there was always but one sheep with the cows. This thing puzzled me for a long time and I looked for some one to explain it; but it was hard to find

anyone who could speak French. Finally I met a curé, who with measured steps was reading his breviary. He explained that the lamb was the wolf's share.

A lamb is worth less than a cow, and, as its capture offers no danger, the wolf always prefers it. But it sometimes happens that the brave little cows form in a hollow square and give battle to the howling beast, impaling him on their sharp-pointed horns.

The wolf! Here is where we find him, the terrifying wolf of our childhood, the white wolf, the big white wolf that all hunters have seen, but no one has ever killed. He is never seen in the morning. About five o'clock in the afternoon, when the sun is going down, he appears making off on the heights, and his silhouette is seen against the sky.

Why has he never been shot? Ah, well! In hunting days, breakfast begins at one o'clock in the afternoon, ending about four. A good deal of wine has been imbibed by that time, and there has been much talk of the white wolf. On leaving the table, he is seen. But how is it that he is never killed?

I walked along on the gray road, cobbled with stones shining in the sunlight. The plain on both sides is flat, scattered with furze. Here and there an enormous stone reminds one of the Druids; and the wind, blowing close the ground, whistles through the bushes. Sometimes a dull roar, like the boom of a distant cannon, makes the earth quiver: I am nearing Penmarch, where the sea plunges into sonorous caves. The waves ingulfed in these caverns, shaking the whole coast, are heard on stormy days as far as Quimper.

For some time now I had been able to see the long line of gray waves which seem to hold sway over this low and barren country. Bursting through the billows, sharp-pointed rocks showed their black heads, encircled with white foam; and near the shore a few houses were hiding behind a heap of stones, as if trying to avoid the eternal hurricane and salt rain of the ocean. A large lighthouse, trembling on its base, juts out into the sea, and the keepers relate that sometimes, on stormy nights, this long column of granite pitches like a ship, and that the clock falls downward, and the pictures on the wall are loosened and come down with a crash.

From this place, as far as Conquet, is the country of wrecks. Here seems to lie in ambush the hideous death of the sea,—death by drowning. No other coast is so dangerous, so much feared, so great a destroyer of men.

In the little low houses one usually sees, in addition to the inevitable pigs, an old woman, tall girls, barelegged and untidy, and also young men, the oldest not thirty years of age. But it is seldom that one ever sees the father or the eldest son. If you ask where they are, the old woman will point to the horizon, where the waves rise and leap, as if preparing to rush upon the land.

It is not only the sea that destroys these men. It has a powerful and perfidious ally in alcohol, which is also gluttonous of human flesh. The fishermen know this and admit it, saying: "When the bottle is full, we see and avoid the dangerous rocks, but when the bottle is empty, we fail to see them."

The shore of Penmarch terrifies one. It was here that wreckers attracted passing ships by tying to the horns of a cow, whose legs were hobbled, a deceiving lantern simulating the lights of another ship.

At the right there is a rock which was once the scene of a horrible drama. The wife of one of the last prefects of the Morbihan was sitting on this rock with her little girl on her knee. The sea, a few yards below them, seemed calm and inoffensive. Suddenly a tidal wave rolled up, and with irresistible force swept away the mother and child out to sea.

The coast-guards witnessed this, but all that remained was a pink parasol floating on the becalmed waves, and the rock, bare and glistening. For a year after, lawyers and physicians discussed and argued as to which died first, the mother or the child. Cats were drowned with their kittens, dogs with their pups, and rabbits with their young ones, to determine this point, there being a large fortune at stake, to go to either family, according as the mother or child died last.

Almost facing this sinister spot rises a Calvary of granite like many others in this pious country, where crosses are as old and as numerous as the dolmens themselves. But this Calvary rises over a strange bas-relief, representing, in a crude manner, the birth of Christ. An Englishman passing here admired the naïve sculpture, and had it roofed over so as to preserve it in its originality.

I followed the shore, the endless shore, along the bay of Audierne. One must ford or wade over two little rivers, toil through the sand or seaweeds, keep on always between these two solitudes, the one

moving and restless, the other motionless,—the sea and the moor.

Audierne is a dull little harbor, enlivened only by the coming and going of the fishing-smacks engaged in catching sardines.

Before leaving next morning I tasted, instead of the common *café-au-lait*, some of these fresh fish, powdered with salt, savory and perfumed, the real violets of the waves. Then I left for the Pointe-du-Raz, the Land's End of France.

I climbed steadily upward, and suddenly I beheld two seas: to the left, the ocean, to the right, the English Channel. This is where they meet, buffeting each other, their waves, forever wild and furious, capsizing ships and ingulfing them.

*"O flots que vous savez de lugubres histoires,*
*Flots profonds redoutés des mères à genoux."*

No trees here, nothing but tufts of grass on the great cape jutting out into the sea. At the extreme end are two lighthouses, and everywhere around are beacons, strung on rocks. One of these has been building for ten years, and is not yet finished. The implacable sea continually destroys the work being done by the indefatigable builders.

Far away, the isle of Sein, the sacred island, looks across, behind the harbor of Brest, at its dangerous sister, the island of Ouessant:

*"Qui voit Ouessant*
*Voit son sang,"*

say sailors. This is the most inaccessible island of all, the island that seamen dread most.

This high promontory ends abruptly, falling in a perpendicular line to the raging seas. A narrow path outlines it, creeping on the inclined rock, spinning itself out on crests not wider than one's hand.

Suddenly I overlooked a fearful abyss, whose walls, black as ink, reverberated the sound of the struggle going on beneath me in that hole which has been called hell.

Though a hundred yards above the sea, I felt the flying spray on my face; and, bending over the abyss, I gazed at the fury of the waters, apparently convulsed in uncontrollable rage.

It was truly a hell, which no poet has yet adequately described. A fear possessed me at the thought of men being thrown in there, tossed about, plunging through the storm between four walls of stone, striking the sides of it only to be thrown back to the waves, and finally disappearing in the bubbling, monstrous billows.

I continued on my way, haunted by these pictures and blown about by the strong wind lashing this solitary cape.

In about twenty minutes I reached a small village. An old priest, reading his breviary in the shade, saluted me. I asked him where I could sleep for the night. He offered me his house.

An hour later, while sitting with him on the doorsteps, talking of this desolate yet impressive country, a little boy went by barefooted, with fair hair flying in the wind.

The curé called to him in his native tongue, and the little urchin approached shyly, with lowered eyes and clasped hands.

"He will recite a canticle for you," said the priest. "He has a wonderful memory, and I hope to make something of the little fellow."

The child muttered unknown words, in that sing-song voice in which children usually recite. He rattled on, without period or comma, pronouncing every syllable as if the whole piece were of one word, stopping a second now and then to take breath, and resuming his hurried recital.

Suddenly he stopped—he had come to the end. The curé tapped him affectionately on the cheek.

"Very good! You can go now."

And the child ran away. My host then added: "You have just heard an old canticle of this country." I rejoined: "An old canticle? Is it well known?" "Oh! no. I will translate it, if you like."

The old man, with powerful voice, raising his arm in a threatening gesture, recited this superb and terrible canticle, the words of which I took down at his dictation:

"CANTICLE FROM BRITTANY.

"Hell! Hell! Do you know what it is, sinners?

"It is a furnace with raging fires, a furnace beside which the fire of a forge, the fire which reddens the bricks of an oven, is nothing but smoke!

"There is never any light there! Fire like fever burns without being visible! Hope never enters there, for the wrath of God hath sealed the door!

"There is fire on your head, fire all around you! You are hungry?—you must eat fire!—You are thirsty? you must drink at that river the sulphur and melted iron!

"You will cry during all eternity; your tears will form a sea; but that sea will not give heil one drop of water! Your tears will only be fuel for the flames, instead of putting them out; and you will hear the marrow boil in your bones!

"Your heads will be cut off from your bodies, and yet you will live! The demons will throw them to one another, and yet you will live! They will roast your flesh on the braziers; you will feel your flesh turning into burning coals; and still you will live!

"And there will be other sufferings. You will hear reproaches, curses, and blasphemies.

"The father will say to his son: 'Cursed be you, son of my flesh; it was for you that I stole to amass a fortune.'

"And the son will answer: 'Cursed be you, my father; for you gave me the pride that brought me here.'

"And the daughter will say to her mother: 'A thousand curses on you, my mother; a thousand curses on you, den of impurities, because you left me free, and afterward I turned away from God!'

"And the mother will not know her children, and she will answer: 'Cursed be my daughters and my sons, cursed be the sons of my daughters, and the daughters of my sons!'

"And then the cries will be heard all through Eternity. And these sufferings will be everlasting! That fire! — oh! that fire! — the wrath of God has lighted this fire! — it will burn forever, without flagging, without smoke, never penetrating less deeply.

"Eternity! Woe to me! Never to cease dying, never to cease drowning in oceans of sufferings!

"Oh! *Never!* thou art a word vaster than the sea! Oh! *Never!* thou art full of cries, of tears, of rage. *Never!* thou harsh word, thou art terrifying!"

When the old priest had finished, he added:
"Is it not terrible?"

Far away we could hear the infuriated waves breaking on the cliff. I could see again that hole of raging foam, mournful and dreary, true abode of death; and something of the mystic fear that makes repenting sinners tremble came over me.

I left at break of day, expecting to reach Douarnenez before night.

A man, speaking French, who had sailed fourteen years on government ships, joined me as I walked along the coast-guard path, and we proceeded together toward the Baie des Trépases, near the Pointe-du-Raz.

It is an immense stretch of sand, of sad and melancholy aspect, giving one a despondent feeling. A bare valley, with a mournful pond without any reeds, a death-like pond, ends at this dreadful shore.

It seems a fitting antechamber to the infernal regions. The yellow sand, dreary and flat, spreads out as far as an enormous rock facing the Pointe-du-Raz, where the waves break.

In the distance, we could see three men motionless on the sand. My companion appeared surprised, for no one, it seems, ever comes into this desolate waste. On drawing near, we perceived something long, stretched at their feet, as if buried in the beach; and now and then they bent down and touched this thing.

It was a corpse, that of a sailor from Douarnenez, drowned the previous week, with four of his comrades. This spot had been watched all the time, for the current usually washes dead bodies here. He was the first to come to this last meeting-place.

But something else seemed to occupy my guide, for drowned men are not uncommon in this region.

He took me to the dreary pond, and, telling me to lean over and look in, he showed me the walls of the city of Ys. I could distinguish some ancient masonry, barely visible. Then I went to drink at a spring a thin stream of water, the best in the country he said. He then told me the story of the vanished city of Ys, as if the event had taken place in his grandfather's time, at the very earliest.

A good but weak king had a beautiful daughter, who was very perverse. She was so beautiful that all men went mad over her, and so perverse was she that she gave herself to each one of them, then had them put to death, by being thrown into the sea from the top of a near-by cliff.

Her passions were more violent than the raging billows and as unappeasable.

God wearied of her wickedness and informed an old saint that He would punish her if she did not repent. The saint warned the king, who told his beloved daughter, whom he had not courage to punish, of God's anger. But she would not heed him, and gave herself up to such debauchery that the whole town imitated her, and became a city of passion, from which all decency, all virtue, disappeared.

One night, God woke the saint to tell him that the hour of His vengeance had come. The saint ran to the palace to tell the king, who alone in that city had remained virtuous. The king ordered a horse, and gave one also to the saint; then a great noise was heard behind them, causing them to look back; they saw the roaring sea rising over the land. The king's daughter appeared at her window, crying: "Father, are you deserting me?" And the king

took her on his horse and fled by one of the gates of the city, as the waves entered by another.

They galloped in the night, but the sea followed them with a rumbling, thundering sound. The foam had reached the horses' hoofs, and the old saint said to the king: "Sire, throw your daughter into the waves, else you are lost!" And the daughter cried: "Father, father, do not abandon me!" But the saint, rising in his stirrups, with a voice of thunder, exclaimed: "It is the will of God!" Then the king thrust from him his daughter who was clutching him, and she fell back into the waters, which immediately receded, carrying her away with them.

And this mournful pond, which covers these ruins, is the water which remained over the impure city, destroyed by the wrath of God.

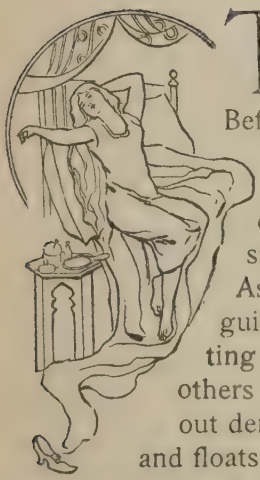
This event, which is told as if it had happened yesterday, took place, it seems, in the fourth century after the coming of Christ.

That night I reached Douarnenez. It is a little hamlet of fishermen, which would become a famous watering-place were it less isolated. Its great charm is the Gulf. It lies in a hollow, and one can see the long, smooth line of the hills, undulating and rounding in delicate curves, whose crests disappear in those blue and white mists, light and transparent, emanating from the sea.

I left next day for Quimper; and that night I slept at Brest, where I took the train for Paris at daybreak.

## XII.

### The Creusot Ironworks



The sky is blue, very blue, and full of sunshine. The train has just passed Montchanin. Before us a black cloud rises, a heavy motionless cloud, which seems to come from the earth, darkening the clear day. It is the smoke of the Creusot Ironworks. As we draw near, we can distinguish a hundred giant chimneys emitting serpent-like clouds of smoke; others that are lower heave and throw out dense vapor. All this blends, spreads, and floats over the city, fills the streets, conceals the sky, and obliterates the sun. It is almost dark now. Coal-dust flies about, stinging the eyes, soiling the skin, staining the garments. The houses are black, as if rubbed over with soot; the sidewalks are black, the windows are powdered with coal-dust. The odor of chimneys, of tar, of floating coal-dust, contracts the throat and oppresses the lungs; sometimes an acrid taste of iron, of burning metal, makes

one look up to inhale pure, wholesome air; but one can see only the thick, dark cloud of smoke, and nearer are the thousand specks of flying coal-dust.

This is the Creusot Ironworks.

A dull, incessant roar makes the earth tremble, a roar composed of innumerable sounds, broken now and then by a violent shock, which vibrates through the town.

We enter the works of the Messrs. Schneider. Here is the kingdom of Iron, where His Majesty, Fire, reigns supreme!

Fire! one sees it everywhere. The immense buildings are set in rows, as far as the eye can reach, as high as mountains, and are filled to the top with engines and machinery, which turn, fall, rise, roar, whistle, and creak.

Here are braziers, over there furnaces; further away are blocks of red-hot iron coming out of ovens to go into gearing-wheels, assuming different shapes, always red-hot. The ravenous machinery devours this glowing iron which it crushes, cuts, saws, flattens, or spins out, turning it into locomotives, ships, cannon, and a thousand other things, some as fine as the chiseled work of artists, others as monstrous as the work of giants, complicated, delicate, powerful, brutal.

Let us look and try to understand.

We enter on the right a vast gallery where four enormous engines are being operated. They go slowly, the wheels revolving, the pistons and rods moving. What are they doing? only giving air to the tall furnaces where the melting iron boils. They are the lungs of the colossal crucibles which we shall

see. They breathe and nothing more; they give life and strength to the monsters.

And here are the crucibles: there are two at the further end of the gallery, each as big as towers, roaring and sputtering such flames that, a few hundred yards away, the eyes are blinded, the skin burned, and one pants as if in a sweating-room.

One would say it was a violent volcano. The fire that comes from its mouth is white, unbearable to the sight, and it is projected with a force and noise impossible to describe.

In it boils steel, Bessemer steel, of which rails are made. A strong man, young and good-looking, wearing a large felt hat, watches this fire attentively.

He is seated before a wheel similar to that of a ship, and now and then he turns it like a pilot. Immediately, the fury of the furnace rises; it throws out a hurricane of flames, the chief melter having increased the monstrous current of air which passes through it.

And still, like the captain of a ship, the man every minute looks through a spyglass, watching the color of the fire. He makes a sign, and a small cart advances and drops other metals in the roaring furnace. The melter once more inspects the changing shades of the furious flames, looking for signs, and suddenly turning another wheel, he upsets the vat.

It turns slowly, throwing a terrifying stream of sparks as high as the roof of the gallery; and then it pours in a dainty way, like an elephant trying to be graceful, a few drops of burning liquid into a mold, then straightens up again, still roaring.

A man carries away this burning metal. It is now an ingot, which is deposited under a hammer operated by steam. The hammer hits, crushes, and thins out the metal, which is then thrown into water, to cool it. It is taken between tongs and broken in two; and the foreman examines the grain before giving the order: "Cast it!"

The vat is reversed once more, and, like a waiter filling glasses, it pours the burning steel into different receptacles spread around it.

It seems to be displaced in a very simple manner. To move these fantastic engines, to make them accomplish their work, to come and go, fall or rise, it is sufficient simply to touch levers as thick as a walking-stick, or press buttons similar to those on electric bells.

A peculiar strength, a strange power, seems to hover over them, guiding the heavy motions of this wonderful machinery.

We go out with faces burning and with bloodshot eyes.

Here we see two brick towers, too high to be roofed; an intense heat comes from them. A man with a crowbar strikes at the bottom and causes a sort of glaze to fall away, then he digs still further. And we see a light; two more strokes and a torrent of fire streams out, running through troughs dug along the earth. This is the smelting-vat.

One feels suffocated before this fearful river, and is forced to retreat into the tall buildings near by, where locomotives and war-ships are being built.

On entering, the confusion is overpowering. This is a labyrinth of cranks, wheels, straps, and gearing-

wheels in motion. At every step one faces some monster at work on red-hot or black iron. Here are saws dividing slabs as thick as a man's body; there, sharp-pointed instruments penetrate blocks of steel as easily as needles pierce a piece of cloth; further away, another machine cuts through sheets of metal as scissors cut paper. All these work together, although with different movements, like a fantastic collection of wicked, roaring beasts. And there is fire under the hammers, in the furnaces, everywhere. And above it all that formidable stroke, which dominates the noise of the wheels, of the boilers, of hammers, and machines, makes the earth tremble. It is the laboring of the gigantic pestle of the Creusot Iron-works.

It stands at the end of a large building containing ten or twelve other pestles. All come down, with regular strokes, on red-hot blocks, throwing out a rain of sparks and, by degrees, flatten or roll out, assuming a curved or a straight form, according to the will of the workmen.

The largest pestle, which weighs two hundred thousand pounds, falls with the weight of a mountain on a red-hot block of steel, larger than itself. At each stroke a hurricane of fire belches forth on all sides, and we see the mass of metal gradually thinning out.

The pestle rises and falls, with an easy grace, regulated by a man who holds a slender lever in his hands; the sight reminds one of those wild beasts who in fairy tales are tamed by the touch of a child.

We now enter the rolling-mills. This is a still more interesting sight. Red serpents overrun the

ground, some as thin as a thread, others as thick as a cable. Here they look like overgrown glowworms, there like immense boa-constrictors. These are wires, and the others are rails.

Men, whose eyes are protected with metallic shades, whose hands, arms, and legs are incased in leather, throw into these machines the everlasting piece of red-hot iron. The machine seizes it, stretches, lengthens, and returns it, thinning it ceaselessly. The iron squirms like a wounded reptile, seems to resist, but yields at last, lengthening indefinitely, constantly retaken and thrown out by the monster. These are the rails.

Powerless to resist, this red mass of opaque and square Bessemer steel stretches out under the effort of the machinery, and in a few seconds becomes a rail. A giant saw cuts it the exact length required, others follow ceaselessly, and nothing ever interrupts this tremendous labor.

We come out at last, as black as stokers, exhausted and with dimmed sight. Above our heads spreads a cloud of thick smoke, which rises to the sky.

Oh! for a few flowers, a field, and a grassy bank where one could lie and rest, without a sound but that of a murmuring brook and the song of birds!

# LA VIE ERRANTE

# I.

## Weariness

I left Paris and France also, because, for one thing, I was weary to death of the Eiffel Tower. Not only could I see it from every direction, but I found it everywhere, copied in all kinds of known materials, exhibited in every show-window, a perpetual racking nightmare.

It was not the tower alone that gave me that irresistible longing to live alone for a while, but all that went on around it, inside and above it, in fact, everything in its vicinity.

How dare the newspapers call it a new style of architecture, when speaking of this metallic shell? For architecture, the least understood, the most neglected, of all the arts to-day, is perhaps the most æsthetic, the most mysterious, and the most prolific in ideas.

It has had, throughout the centuries, the privilege of symbolizing each era, as it were, of summing up, by a very few typical monuments, the manner of

thought, the feelings, and dreams of different races of varied civilizations.

A few temples and churches, a few palaces and castles, comprise throughout the world the whole history of architecture, conveying to our eyes better than books the harmony of lines and the charm of design, with all the grace and grandeur belonging to a certain epoch.

I often wonder what will be thought of our generation, if some unheard-of process of nature does not tumble down before long this high and slender pyramid of iron ladders, this unsightly giant skeleton, whose base seems built to support an enormous cyclopean monument, and ends in a ridiculously slight profile of something that looks like the stack of a factory.

This tower is the solving of a problem, we are told. Even so, but science has not benefited by it in any way, and I prefer, to this childish attempt at rebuilding the Tower of Babel, the one that was made in the twelfth century, by the architects of the Tower of Pisa.

The idea of building that delightful tower, with its eight stories of marble columns, leaning over as if about to fall, proving to an astonished posterity that the center of gravity is, after all, a useless prejudice of engineers, and that monuments, and superb ones, too, can do without it. This, and the fact that after seven centuries it draws more visitors than the Eiffel Tower in seven months, certainly constitutes a problem,—since we all admit there is one,—but a problem more original in its conception than that of this huge piece of ironwork, daubed with the hues of the

rainbow, which is evidently intended to appeal to any but artistic eyes.

I know it has been said that the Tower of Pisa has gradually come to lean over of itself. Who knows?—this splendid monument keeps well its secret, which is continually discussed but can never be proved.

What matters to me, after all, this tower of Eiffel? It was only the beacon of an International Kirmess, as it was called, the memory of which will always haunt me as a nightmare, the horrible sight to a disgusted man of a human crowd disporting itself.

I do not mean to criticise this colossal political enterprise, The Universal Exposition, which proved to the world, at a time when it was necessary to do so, the strength and vitality, the activity and inexhaustible wealth, of this wonderful country, France.

We gave much pleasure, much entertainment, and we set an example to all nations and peoples. They enjoyed it all to their heart's content—we did well and so they did well.

I found, though, on the very first day, that these amusements did not appeal to me. After inspecting, with profound admiration, the machinery and noting the fantastic discoveries of science and mechanism, of physiology and modern chemistry, on finding that the *danse du ventre* and other Arabian dances have really no charm or character except in the *ksours*, the white tents of Algeria, I concluded that to come here now and then would be very fatiguing, but somewhat entertaining, and one could rest from it all, at home or at one's friends.

But I had not dreamed of what would become of

Paris, invaded by the universe. At daybreak, the streets were filled with people, the sidewalks overcrowded. They were all coming from the Exposition, or returning to it. On the roads, the carriages were so close to one another that they resembled an endless train. Not one was empty; no cabman would consent to take a fare anywhere but to the Exposition. No cabs were to be had at the Club, they were all engaged by strangers; not a table could be secured in restaurants, not a friend dined at home, nor was there one who would consent to dine at your home. If he accepted your invitation, it was on condition that you take him to the Eiffel Tower—it was more fun. And everyone by general consent invited their friends there every day of the week, either to lunch or to dine.

In all that heat, that dust, that offensive odor, in that crowd of common people, merry and perspiring, in the midst of greasy papers flying about, with the smell of cooking meat and spilled wine, with the breath of three hundred thousand persons around you, with the elbowing, the jostling, the entangling of all this overheated mass of human beings, I could understand how one could come and eat here, once or twice, disgusted, but curious to see and taste the cookery of these aërial eating-houses; but what seemed incredible to me was, that anyone could dine here every night in that foul crowd, as did many persons in good society, those fastidious ones who are considered the *élite*, the dainty creatures who are so easily nauseated when confronted with the sight of the common working classes.

This proves decidedly, however, the complete tri-

umph of democracy. There is no caste now, no blue blood, no real aristocracy. There are the rich and the poor — no other classing can better render the degrees of modern society.

An aristocracy of another order is being established, which was unanimously recognized at the Exposition, that is, the aristocracy of science, or rather the scientific element of trade and industry.

As for the Arts, they are vanishing; the meaning of them is being forgotten by the best people of a nation, who looked on without protesting at the horrible decoration of the central dome, and those of some buildings near by.

The modern Italian taste is gaining on us, and the contagion is such that even the small space reserved for artists in that popular bazaar, which has just closed, had the appearance of advertising booths, or the booths of a country fair.

I would not protest, however, against the coming and the reign of learned scientists, if the very nature of their work and discoveries did not compel me to state that, after all, they are nothing but commercial scientists.

It is not their fault, no doubt. But it seems as if the higher flight of the human mind must be confined between two walls, which will never again be scaled: trade and barter.

At the beginning of civilization, the soul of man leaned toward the beautiful in art. It seems as if, finally, some jealous divinity had said: "I forbid you to think of these things any more, but give all your thoughts to the material side of life, and I will permit you to make endless discoveries."

It is true that, to-day, the entrancing and powerful spirit of the artistic centuries is gradually dying out, while, at the same time, great minds of an entirely different order are awakening and inventing machinery of all kinds, astonishing apparatus, mechanism which is as complicated as that of the human body, and also combining different substances which give astounding and wonderful results. All this helps either to assist man's physical needs or to annihilate him.

Ideal conceptions, as well as purely disinterested science, those of Galileo, Newton, and Pascal, seem forbidden to us, while our imagination is easily carried away in speculating on discoveries useful to our material existence.

Does not the genius of the man, whose thought, in one bound, went from the fall of an apple to the great law that governs the world, seem born of a germ more nearly divine than that of the practical mind of the American inventor, the wonderful manufacturer of bells, speaking tubes, and lighting apparatus?

Is not this the secret vice of the modern mind, the sign of its inferiority in the midst of its triumph?

I am, perhaps, entirely at fault. However, these things, which are only of practical interest, do not appeal to us as do the thoughts of former days. For us, poor irritable slaves of dreams of delicate beauty, they haunt and spoil our lives.

I felt that it would be very pleasant to revisit Florence, and I bade farewell to France.

## II.

### Night

Leaving the harbor of Cannes at three o'clock in the morning, we could still inhale the breeze wafted from the land during the night. A breath of sea-air blew our yacht with its outspread sails toward the Italian coast.

Ours is a vessel of twenty tons, painted white, with a slender strip of gold surrounding it, as a girdle might encircle the breast of a swan. Its sails of new canvas, under the rays of an August sun, throwing flames on the water, look like the silky wings of a bird against the blue sky. The jib-sails, light triangles rounded out by a breath of wind, blow about gently, and the mainsail is slack under its fifty-four-foot peak, which points upward like an arrow; the mizzen-sail, at the stern of the boat, flaps in a sleepy way.

We all doze on deck. It is the afternoon of a perfect summer day on the Mediterranean — the wind has died away. The fierce sun fills the sky and turns

the sea into a soft, bluish sheet, motionless and without a ripple, asleep, as it were, under a glittering misty down.

Notwithstanding the awnings, which have been put up as a protection from the sun, the heat is so great that I am forced to go below and rest on a divan.

It is always cool here. The yacht is of deep draught; it was built for rough weather in the northern seas. A crew and passengers, six or seven people, perhaps, can live comfortably in the floating abode, and eight can sit down at dinner in the little dining-room.

The interior is finished in varnished pine, framed with teak-wood, brightened by the brasses of locks, hinges, and chandeliers, all the yellow metals that are the luxury of yachts.

How strangely quiet everything is, after the hubbub of Paris! I hear absolutely nothing. Now and then, the sailor who sleepily watches at the helm gives a slight cough, the clock hanging on the wall ticks with a noise that sounds formidable in this silence of the heavens and the sea. And this ticking of the clock, which alone disturbs the quiet of the elements, gives me suddenly the wonderful sensation of being in endless solitude, where the sound of murmuring worlds is deadened and becomes almost imperceptible in this universal silence.

It seems as if something of the eternal calm of space came down and spread over the motionless sea on this stifling hot day. It is an oppressive, irresistible feeling that lulls and deadens like contact with infinite space. The will falters, thought stops, and sleep takes hold of both body and soul.

Night had almost come when I awoke. A twilight breeze, hardly hoped for, swept us along until the sun went down.

We were very near the coast, in sight of the city of San Remo, which we could not reach that night, however. Other small villages or towns were spread out at the foot of the high mountain, looking like bundles of clothes drying on the beach.

Night came, the mountains disappeared, and fires were lighted on the water's edge, all along the coast.

A delicious smell of cooking, coming from the interior of the yacht, mingled agreeably with the salt air.

After dinner I lay at full length on deck. This quiet day of drifting had wiped out all there was in my mind, as a sponge clears a tarnished glass; and memories crowded upon my thoughts, memories of the life I had left behind me, of well-known people, loved or otherwise.

Nothing is so conducive to all kinds of thoughts, and to giving rein to one's imagination, as to be alone at sea with the sky overhead on a hot night. I felt excited, vibrating in all my being, as if I had been drinking some rich wine, inhaling ether, or were still in the passionate embrace of a beloved one.

The night breeze, moistening the skin with a chill of rapidly cooling air, crept over me, entered my lungs, and both body and soul were at peace.

Is there any higher enjoyment for those who receive their sensations through every pore, as well as through the eyes, the mouth, the sense of smell, and that of hearing? It is a rare and much-to-be-dreaded

faculty, perhaps, this highly excitable and nervous feeling that pervades certain organisms and creates emotion in the face of the simplest physical impressions, making one feel sorrowful or joyful, according to the change in temperature, or to the fragrant odors emanating from the soil, or as the day is bright or gloomy.

Not to care to enter a theater, because the contact with a crowd unnerves one in an inexplicable manner; not to like a ballroom because the fictitious gaiety and the whirling motion of the dancers irritate like an insult; to feel downhearted or happy without any perceptible cause, according to the decorations or combinations of light, and to encounter sometimes, through certain perceptions, physical pleasures which nothing can ever reveal to less delicately organized natures—is this to be deplored or otherwise? I do not know; but if the nervous system is not sensitive to a point which reaches pain or ecstasy, then it can give us only very ordinary sensations and vulgar gratifications.

This mist of the sea was like a caress, filling me with happiness. It spread over the heavens, and I watched with delight the stars enveloped in it, looking somewhat paler in the darkened sky. The coast, meanwhile, had received behind us this vapor floating over the sea, and each star appeared as if surrounded with a halo. The earth looked as if some supernatural hand had packed it in fleecy clouds, as if about to ship it to an unknown destination.

Suddenly through this snowy shadow, a sound of distant music came over the sea. I thought some ærial orchestra must be hovering in space serenading

me. The faint but clear sounds were wafted through the night in a murmur of operatic music.

A voice near me said: "This is Sunday, and the band is playing in the public park of San Remo."

I heard this with astonishment, thinking I must be dreaming. I listened a long time, and with growing delight, to the strains of music carried so far through space. But suddenly, in the middle of a well-known air, the sound swelled, increased in volume, and seemed to gallop toward us. It was so strange, so weird, that I rose to listen. Without doubt it was drawing nearer and louder every second. All was coming toward me, but how — on what phantom raft would it appear? It seemed so near that I peered into the darkness excitedly, and suddenly I was bathed in a hot breeze fragrant with aromatic plants, the strong perfume of the myrtle, the mint, and the citron, with lavender and thyme scorched on the mountain by the burning sun.

It was the land breeze, overcharged with the breath of the hills, that was carrying toward the sea, intermingled with the Alpine odor, these harmonious strains of music.

I was breathless, intoxicated with delight, pulsating in every sense. I could not tell whether I were hearing music and breathing perfumes, or sleeping in the stars.

This perfumed breeze blew us out to sea, where it floated away in the night. The sounds died out gradually, as the ship moved on.

I could not sleep, and I wondered how a modern poet, of the so-called school of symbolism, would have explained the confusing, nervous vibration which

I had just experienced, and which seems to me, in plain language, untranslatable. No doubt, some of those poets who take such pains to give expression to the artistic sensitiveness of thought would have come out with honor, giving in euphonious rhymes, replete with intentional sonorousness, the unintelligible though perceptible meaning of these perfumed sounds, this starry mist, and the sweet land-breeze, scattering music to the winds.

I recalled a sonnet from their patron, Baudelaire:

"Nature is a temple where living columns
Sometimes allow jumbled words to escape.
Man walks through forest of symbols
That watch him with familiar looks.
Like long-drawn echoes mingling in the distance,
In a dark and deep unity,
As vast as night, as vast as light,
Perfumes, colors, and sounds, answer each other.
There are perfumes as sweet as a child's lips,
Sweet as a clarinet, green as the meadows,
And others, again, strong and overpowering,
Having the breadth of infinite space,
Like ambergris, musk, benzoin, and incense,
Which exalt the enraptured mind and senses."

Had I not just felt, in my inmost soul, the meaning of this mysterious line:

"Perfumes, colors, and sounds answer each other."

And not only do they answer each other in nature, but the answer is also given within us, and they mingle "in a dark and deep unity," as the poet says, by the pressure of one organ against another.

This phenomenon, however, is known to medical science, and a great many articles have been written on the subject, under the title of "Colored Hearing."

It has been proved that in certain nervous and highly-strung natures, when one sense receives a shock that affects it, the concussion spreads like the ripples of a wave to the other senses, which respond each in its own way. Thus music, with certain people, evokes colored visions; it must then be a kind of sensitive contagion, transformed according to the normal action of each nerve-center.

In this way can be explained a sonnet from Arthur Rimbaud, who declares that there are shades and colors in vowels, an article of faith which has been adopted by the school of symbolism.

Is he right or wrong? To the breaker of stones on the highway, and even in the opinion of many of our great men, this poet is either a fool or a dreamer. But, in the mind of many others, he has discovered and expressed an absolute truth, though these explorers of minute perceptions must differ in their opinion of shades and mental pictures evoked in us by the mysterious vibrations of vowels or of music.

If it is a recognized fact, according to science,—the science of to-day,—that musical sounds acting on certain organisms can give out color, if *sol* can be red, *fa*, lilac or green, why would not these identical sounds carry taste to the palate or odors to the nostrils?

Why should not fastidious though somewhat hysterical natures enjoy everything with every one of their senses at the same time, and why could not

symbolists reveal a delightful sensitiveness to beings of their own kind, incurable and privileged poets that they are? This is decidedly more a question of artistic pathology than even one of true æstheticism.

Can it be, however, that some of these interesting writers, who have become neurotic through their very enthusiasm, have reached such a degree of excitability that every impression received creates in them a sort of concerted unison of all the perspective faculties?

For is not all this expressed in their strange poetry of sounds, which, although somewhat unintelligible, attempts, nevertheless, to run the whole gamut of sensations and prove by the very harmony of words, much more than by their rational union and their known significance, the existence of meanings that are obscure to us, but clear as day to them?

Artists have come to the end of their resources, there is nothing more to publish, nothing unknown in the way of emotions or figures of speech. Since the beginning of time, all the flowers of this particular field have been culled. And so, in their powerlessness to create, they feel in an infinite way that for man there may still be a broadening of the soul and of the senses. And the mind having five gates, half-open and chained, called the five senses, it is at these portals that the men who are enamored of the new art keep continually tugging with their utmost strength.

The mind, that blind and hard-working Unknown, cannot learn, understand, or discover anything except through the senses. They are its providers, the only agents between it and nature. The mind works on

the materials furnished by them alone, which they themselves can gather only according to their sensitiveness, their strength, and acuteness.

The value of thought must then depend directly on the value of the organs, and its breadth is limited according to their number.

M. Taine, however, has handled and developed this idea in a masterly treatise. There are only five senses. These reveal to us, by interpreting them, certain properties of surrounding matter and an unlimited number of other phenomena that we are unable to perceive.

Let us suppose that man had been created without ears; he would exist in very much the same manner; but to him the universe would be silent; he would have no idea of noise, of music, which are both transformed vibrations.

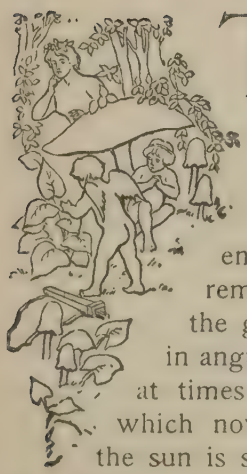
But suppose he had been given other organs, powerful and sensitive, capable of transforming into acute perceptions the actions and attributes of all the inexplicable things that surround us, how much more varied would be the extent of our knowledge and emotions!

It is into this inscrutable domain that every artist attempts to enter, by tormenting, violating, and exhausting the mechanism of his thoughts. Those whose brains have given way, Heine, Balzac, Baudelaire, the wandering Byron,—seeking death, disconsolate at the misfortune of being a great poet,—Musset, Jules de Goncourt, and so many others besides, did they not all break down under the strain of attempting to overthrow the material barrier in which is imprisoned the human mind?

Yes, our organs are the nourishers, the masters of artistic genius. The ear begets the musician, the eye creates the painter. Every organ co-operates in helping the poet. With the novelist, the sense of vision usually predominates. It predominates to such an extent that it becomes easy to detect, on reading a sincere and well-written novel, the physical qualities and attributes of the author's glance. The magnifying of details, giving their importance or their insignificance, whether they encroach on the general scheme or not, —all these illustrate, in a decided manner, the degree and difference of short-sightedness. The proportion of the lines, the perspective offered to the most minute observation, the fact of neglecting to point out some slight information which very often would be the clue to the characteristics of a person or a locality, —do not these indicate the farseeing though careless glance of the passer-by?

## III.

### The Italian Coast



The sky is overcast — day is breaking through the mists of the night, which spread like a wall, thicker in some places, almost white in others, between dawn and us.

We fear, vaguely, with a tightening of the heart, that the fog may remain throughout the day, obscuring the glorious light, and our eyes look up in anguish in a sort of silent prayer. But at times we can see, by the clear spaces which now and then divide the mass, that the sun is shining above these mists, illuminating their snowy surface and the blue sky. We wait and hope.

By degrees they lighten and become thinner, appearing to fade gradually away. One feels that the sun is burning them, crushing them in its ardor; that the immense ceiling of clouds is too weak to resist, and that it must break and part under the great weight of the glaring light.

A faint glimmer is seen in the sky, then there is a gap, through which glistens a ray of sunshine, in a long, slanting line, spreading as it falls. It seems as if fire would break out in this parting of the heavens — it is a mouth that opens, widens, and throws out flames through burned lips, scattering a cascade of golden light on the waves. Then, in a great many places at once, the shadowy arch breaks and falls away, a hundred arrows of brilliant light rain down on the water, scattering over the horizon the joyousness of the radiant sun.

The air has freshened through the night; a ripple of wind caresses the sea, and the blue, silky surface quivers under its touch.

Before us, on a high rocky peak, which seems to rise out of the sea and lean upon the hills, nestles a little town, painted rose color by the hand of man, as the horizon is by the victorious dawn. A few blue houses, here and there, give variety to the scene. One would think it the abode of a princess out of the "Arabian Nights." It is Port Maurice.

When one gets so fine a view of it, one should never land — I did so, however. I found everything in ruins, the houses crumbling on each side of the streets. A part of the city which has fallen down — probably during an earthquake — shows from the top to the bottom of the hill a row of roofless and dismantled dwellings, old houses of plaster, through which the wind blows. And the rose tint, so pretty from a distance where it harmonized with the rising sun, on nearer view shows a fearfully faded conglomeration of colors, stained by the sun and washed out by the rain.

All along the winding streets, filled with dust and stones, a nameless, indescribable odor floats, so powerful and penetrating that I hurried back to the yacht, disgusted and disappointed. Yet this city is the chief town of one of the provinces. It stands out at the entrance to this Italian country like a flag of distress.

Facing it, on the other side of the gulf, is Oneglia, also a foul, ill-smelling town, though somewhat less poor and more lively, if one may judge by the look of the place.

Under the gateway leading to the Royal College, which stands wide open during the vacation, an old woman sits mending a dirty mattress.

We enter the harbor of Savona.

A large group of manufactories or foundries, whose chimneys are fed every day by the coal brought here by four or five English steamers, emit through their giant openings volumes of winding smoke that fall back on the city in a shower of soot, blown here and there by the wind, like a black snow-fall.

Never go into that harbor, sailors of small sailing vessels, if you wish to keep your pretty white sails clean!

Notwithstanding this, Savona is charming, a typical Italian town; its narrow streets are full of bustling merchants, with fruit spread on the ground, ripe red tomatoes, black or yellow grapes, transparent as if filled with light; green lettuce cleansed in a hurry, the leaves of which spread about in abundance — all this vegetation makes the place look as if the gardens had invaded the town.

After returning to the yacht, I saw along the wharf, on an immense table which filled the deck of a Neapolitan boat, a startling sight—at first glance it looked like a murderers' banquet. On seeing a crimson color spreading over the boat, my first impression was that the sailors were having a feast of raw flesh, torn in pieces, but on looking more attentively, I found that this banquet was composed of about a hundred halves of blood-red watermelons. It looked as if these men were burying their teeth in raw flesh, as do wild animals in captivity when being fed. They were holding a festival—several sailors of neighboring craft had been invited—and all were enjoying themselves. The caps these men wore were less sanguine than the flesh of this juicy fruit.

When night came, I went back to the town. The sound of music attracted me to its far end, and I found an avenue where groups of people were walking leisurely toward the evening concert, given two or three times a week by the municipal band. In this musical country, these orchestras equal, even in the small towns, those of our best theaters. I recalled the one I had heard on the deck of my yacht one night, the memory of which remained as one of the sweetest sensations I had ever experienced.

This avenue ended in a square almost on the beach, and there, scarcely lighted by the yellowish gas-jets here and there, the orchestra discoursed music to an attentive audience.

The sound of the waves could be heard in a regular and monotonous rhythm, mingling with the lively strains of music; and the sky, of a glassy pur-

plish tint, was filled with a golden dust of stars as night crept over us. Its transparent darkness fell over this silent crowd, few of whom ever whispered, as they walked around the inclosure where the musicians played or sat on benches surrounding them, or on large stones here and there on the beach, some even on large beams, piled up near the high wooden framework of a ship in course of construction.

I do not know whether the women of Savona are pretty, but I do know that they are charming, as they go about bareheaded at night, each carrying a fan. It was fascinating, this silent beating of imprisoned wings, these white or black or spotted wings, and they looked like fluttering moths held between the fingers. As I met each woman, in every group walking or resting, I found this waving of fans, and there was something so coquettish and truly feminine about it that it appealed strongly to a man's nature. And, behold! in the midst of the palpitating fans and uncovered heads all about me, I began to fancy myself in fairyland, as I used to do when a mere boy at boarding-school, in the cold dormitory at night, when before dropping off to sleep, I lived again as the hero of forbidden stories under cover of a desk. Sometimes, deep in my old, incredulous heart, memories come to me of the simple innocence of my youth.

One of the most beautiful sights in this world is Genoa, seen from the sea. At the head of a bay the city rises as if out of water. Around the hills, rounded out on each side as if to inclose and protect it, there are fifteen small towns, whose bright little houses are

reflected in the water. To the left are Cogoleto, Arenzano, Voltri, Pra, Pegli, Sestri-Ponente, San Pier d'Arena, and to the right Sturlo, Quarto, Quinto, Nervi, Bogliasco, Sori, Recco, and Camogli, the last white spot on the Cape of Porto-Fino, which closes the gulf on the southeast.

Genoa rises above her immense harbor on the first hill of the Alps, which stand out behind it like a giant wall. On the jetty is a small, square tower, a light-house, called "The Lantern," which looks like an exaggerated candle.

We pass into the outer port, an enormous basin well sheltered, where innumerable tugboats go about seeking trade; then, after rounding the eastern pier, we enter the port itself, where there is a crowd of ships, those ships of the south and the east, with their delightful coloring, the triangular, one-masted ships, painted and rigged in the most fantastic manner, carrying on their prows blue or gilt madonnas, or even strange-looking animals, which are regarded as talismans.

This fleet, with its figureheads, is lined up along the wharves, their sharp and uneven bows turned toward the center of the basin. Then, further on, are the powerful iron steamers, narrow and high, with colossal outlines. There are also, in the midst of these pilgrims of the sea, brigs and three-masted ships, clothed in white, like the Arabs, on whose shining dress the sunlight appears to glitter.

If there is nothing prettier than the entrance to the port of Genoa, then there is nothing uglier than the entrance to the city. The wharf is a swamp of rubbish, and the narrow streets are inclosed like cor-

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ridors between two winding rows of very tall houses, from which emanate pestilential and sickening odors. One feels in Genoa as in Florence, and still more so in Venice, that these once aristocratic cities have fallen into the hands of the people.

We are reminded of fierce barons fighting or bartering at sea, who, with money brought home from their conquests — either by capture or by trade — have built those astonishing marble palaces which still line the principal streets. When we enter these magnificent residences, odiously daubed by the descendants of the haughtiest of all republics, when we compare the style, the courts, the gardens, the porticos, the interior galleries, and all the decorative and gorgeous appointments, with the barbaric wealth of the finest mansions of modern Paris, with the palaces of millionaires who only know how to handle money, who are powerless to conceive, to wish for, or to create a new thought with their gold,— we understand, then, that the real supremacy of the intelligence, the meaning of the rare beauty of forms, the perfection of proportions and lines, have disappeared from our democratic society, composed now of rich financiers without taste and parvenus without traditions.

It is really an interesting thing to observe this hackneyed way of building modern hotels. On entering the old palaces of Genoa, you will see a series of galleried and colonnaded courts, marble staircases of marvelous beauty, each one designed and executed by a true artist, for men of cultivated taste.

On entering the old châteaux of France, you will notice the same tendency toward a new and original

ornamentation. But, again, on entering any one of the wealthiest homes of Paris at the present time, you will admire curious ancient articles, carefully catalogued, labeled, and exhibited in glass cases, according to their known value, vouched for by experts, but not once will you see any new or original idea in any part of the building itself.

The architect is told to build a fine house, to cost several millions, five or ten per cent. of which is his commission, according to the amount of artistic work he puts upon it.

The upholsterer, for a given remuneration, takes charge of the decoration of the interior. As these men realize the lack of artistic knowledge in their clients, they do not venture to propose anything original or unknown, and so they repeat the same designs.

After you have visited these ancient palaces of Genoa, after you have admired a few paintings, especially three masterpieces of Van Dyck, there is nothing more to see, except the Campo-Santo, which is a modern cemetery, an extraordinary museum of funeral sculpture, the most ridiculous and comical place in the world. Along the four sides of an immense gallery, in a giant cloister, opening on a yard paved with the flat white gravestones of the poor, we file past a series of statues of tradesmen mourning their dead.

What an extraordinary idea! The chiseling of the figures shows a remarkable talent, and proves that they are the work of artists. The material of the robes, of the waistcoats, and trousers is depicted in a most realistic manner. I saw a figure wearing a *moiré*

silk gown, the carving of which made the material almost indistinguishable from the real article, and, in my opinion, nothing can be so irresistibly grotesque, so trivial and common, as these figures mourning some beloved one.

Who is to blame for this? Is it the sculptor, who can see in his models only the commonplace physiognomy of the modern tradesman, who cannot discover that divine spark in human beings, which Flemish artists expressed so well when depicting even the most ordinary and sometimes the ugliest types of their race? Or is the tradesman himself to blame,—this man whom the low democratic civilization has tossed about like a pebble on a beach, wearing away his distinctive characteristics, making him lose, in this constant friction, the last marks which remained of the originality with which all social classes were endowed by nature.

The Genoese are very proud of this extraordinary museum, which upsets our idea of the artistic fitness of things.

From the port of Genoa to the point of Porto-Fino is a series of towns, a scattering of houses on the beach, between the bright blue of the sea and the brilliant green of the mountain. A breeze from the southeast compels us to tack. It is a light breeze, but it blows in gusts that make the yacht keel over on its side, then dart swiftly forward, leaving behind on both sides two white streaks of foam. Then the wind goes down, the boat rights itself and continues on its quiet way, toward the shore or away from it, according to the direction of the wind.

About two o'clock the captain sweeps the horizon with his glass to make out, according to the quantity of sails and the tacking of either vessel, the direction and strength of the wind, which in these parts sweeps with great suddenness across the water, or comes in gentle zephyrs, as capricious as the moods of a pretty woman.

"We must take in sail, sir," he says, "the two schooners ahead of us have just hauled down their topsails; a stiff gale is coming."

The order was given, and the inflated canvas slid down from the top of the mast, flapping limply and palpitating somewhat, as if conscious of the coming storm.

There were no waves, just a few ripples here and there; but suddenly in the distance I saw the water was quite white, as if a sheet were spread over it. And it was coming toward us, growing nearer every second, hastening along rapidly, and when this foamy patch was only a few yards away from us the sails of the yacht were struck by a furious wind that tore over the sea, scattering the flying spray, which resembled fine feathers plucked from the breast of a goose.

All this foam, torn from the water, flew about, dispersing under the invisible whistling attack of the wind, and with our vessel lying over on its side, with our lee gunwale under water, the deck washed by the surging waves, and the weather shrouds drawn taut, with masts and spars creaking, we rushed along at a mad, reckless pace. It is a unique sensation, this excitement of holding between your hands, with muscles strained from head to foot, the

iron bar that guides through the storm this wild animal made of wood and canvas.

The fury of the gale lasted only about three quarters of an hour; and then suddenly, as the Mediterranean resumed its beautiful blue tint, the atmosphere became quiet, as if the sky's ill humor had passed away. The storm had spent itself in a paroxysm of rage; it was the end of an ugly morning, and the sun's joyous laugh again spread over the earth.

As we neared the cape, I saw at its far end, at the foot of a steep rock, a church and three houses. Who can possibly live here? I thought. What can these people do? How can they communicate with the outer world, except through one of the little canoes pulled up on the beach.

After clearing the cape, the line of the coast is uninterrupted until Porto-Venera is reached, at the entrance of the Gulf of Spezzia; all this part of the shore is captivating.

In a wide, deep bay, opening before us, we get a glimpse of Santa-Margherita, then Rapallo, Chiavari, and further away Sestri-Levante.

The yacht, having tacked about, glided along only two cable lengths from the rocks, and at the end of the cape, which we had almost rounded, we discovered suddenly a gorge where the sea enters, a gorge hidden away, barely seen, filled with pine, olive, and chestnut-trees. The tiny village of Porto-Fino spreads out in a half-circle around this quiet haven.

We sailed slowly through the narrow strait which joins this delightful, natural harbor to the sea, and entered the amphitheater of houses, crowned by a

forest of brilliant green, both being reflected in the quiet, round mirror where a few fishing-smacks lie apparently idle.

One of them draws near, and in it is seated an old man. He bows and welcomes us, points out where we may anchor, takes hold of our cable to moor us to the land, returns to offer his services, his advice, in fact, does the honors of this little fishing hamlet. He is the harbor-master.

I never, perhaps, experienced a pleasanter sensation than that of entering this delightfully green creek; I had a feeling of rest, soothing to the nerves, the ceasing of the vain struggle of life's battles; and it was more delightful still to hear the noise of the falling anchor, announcing that here we were to remain for some time.

For eight days now I have been rowing. The yacht is moored in the midst of this quiet stream, and I go about in my canoe along the coast, in grottoes where the sea moans in invisible gaps, around small islands which it kisses continually as it rises, and over rocks wholly submerged with water or covered with seaweeds. I love to see floating under water, waving in the barely perceptible motion of the waves, those aquatic red and green weeds, where are entangled and hidden immense families of fish yet to be hatched. They are like silver needle-points, alive and swimming.

On looking at the rocks on the bank, I see groups of naked boys whose bodies are browned by the sea, starting in surprise at sight of an intruder. They are there in large numbers; they might also be the offspring of the sea, a tribe of young tritons born yes-

terday, frolicking and climbing up the rocks of granite, as if to inhale the air. They are to be seen everywhere, hidden in crevices, standing on the edge of promontories, where their frail, graceful little forms look like bronze statuettes, outlined against the Italian sky. Others, seated, with legs swinging, are resting between dips.

We left Porto-Fino to spend a little time in Santa-Margherita. This is not a seaport, but it lies deep in a gulf, somewhat sheltered by a mole.

The land here is so attractive that it almost makes one forget the sea. The town is protected by a deep angle formed by two mountains — a valley leading to Genoa divides them. On those hills innumerable little paths, running between two stone walls, about three feet high, cross and recross, go up and down; they are narrow, full of stones, deep as ravines sometimes, and again climbing like a stairway. These paths divide countless gardens of olive and fig-trees, garlanded with red vines. Through the foliage of the climbing vines in the trees, we can descry the blue sea, the red capes, the white villages, the green pines on the hills, and the tall, gray summits of stone. We saw here and there, sitting before their houses, peasant women making lace. In all this country we seldom pass a doorway where there are not two or three of these women employed in this hereditary work, handling, with their delicate fingers, numerous white or black threads, from which dangle, with a continual hop and skip, little bits of yellowish wool. These women are often pretty, tall, and graceful, but they are careless in dress, and show no coquetry

whatever. A great many still reveal traces of their Oriental ancestry.

One day, in the street of a hamlet, one of them passed near me, giving me an impression of such exquisite beauty as I have never seen anywhere. Under a heavy coil of dark hair which fell over her eyes, and which had been put up evidently with hurried carelessness, were the oval, brown features of an Oriental, the features of the daughters of her ancestors, the Moors, whose graceful carriage she still retained; but the Florentine sun had tinted her skin with gold. Her eyes—such eyes!—were very large, and of the deepest black, and she looked at me from under the longest and thickest eyelashes I ever have seen. The skin around her eyes was so strangely dark that if I had not seen her in the glare of day I should have been inclined to think that she had had recourse to art.

When we meet such lovely creatures in tatters, why cannot we carry them away with us, if only to adorn them, to tell them how beautiful they are, and just lie at their feet admiring them! What if they do not understand the mystery of our enthusiasm, if they are unresponsive, like all idols, bewitching, made only to be worshiped by frenzied beings, trying to find words worthy of expressing praise of their beauty!

However, if I could choose between the most beautiful of living beings, and that of the famous picture of a woman painted by Titian, which I was to see a week later in the great Hall of the Council, I would take Titian's reclining woman.

Florence, the city where of all places I should have loved to live in bygone days,—which has for me

eye and my heart an unspeakable charm, — still attracts me in a sensual way by that painting of Titian, which is a wonderful dream of carnal attraction. When I think of this city, so full of marvels, from which one returns at the end of the day weary like a sportsman after a long hunt, suddenly, like a glorious light illuminating my thoughts, this woman, lying on the long canvas, appears to me a vivid reality in her golden-haired, nude beauty.

And, after all this conjuring of all the powerful seduction of the human body, the thought of the sweet and pure Madonnas rises in my mind, those of Raphael first, the "Madonna of the Goldfinch," the "Madonna Granduca," the "Madonna of the Chair," and others besides, those of minor artists, with their simple features, their pale hair, idealized and mystical, and those other Madonnas of grosser artists, represented in blooming health.

When going about, not only in this unique city, but in all this part of Tuscany, where the men of the Renaissance have scattered masterpieces of art with such a free hand, we wonder at the glorious and fruitful minds, intoxicated with beauty, madly productive, of these generations trembling in artistic delirium. In the churches of the small towns, where we go in search of objects not noticed by the common traveler, we discover in some walls, or deep in the sanctuaries, priceless paintings of these unpretending masters, who did not sell their canvases in the yet unexplored America, but went about poverty-stricken without hope of a fortune, working for art's sake, like true workmen.

And this race, which never faltered, has left noth-

ing inferior. The same ray of undying beauty appeared from the brush of painters, from the chisel of sculptors, and was magnified in lines of stone on the face of monuments. Their churches and chapels are filled with sculptures of Lucca della Robbia, Donatello, and Michelangelo; their bronze portals are by Bonannus or John of Bologna.

On reaching the Piazza Della Signoria, facing the Loggia dei Lanzi, we perceived, grouped together under the same portico, the "Rape of the Sabines," and "Hercules Wrestling with the Centaur"; "Nessus," by John of Bologna; "Perseus with the Head of Medusa," by Benvenuto Cellini; "Judith and Holofernes," by Donatello. It sheltered also, only a few years ago, the "David" of Michelangelo.

But the more you are intoxicated the more you are overcome by the seductive charms of a trip through this land of masterpieces, the more do you feel strange uneasiness mingling with the joy of seeing. It comes from the amazing contrast of the modern commonplace throng, so ignorant of what it is viewing and of the places it inhabits. We perceive that the dainty, haughty, and refined feelings of the old nations that have disappeared are not to be found under headgears of soft, brown felt, in the indifferent eyes of this matter-of-fact population.

On returning to the coast, I stopped at Pisa, to see once more the Duomo. Who can explain the impressive and melancholy charm of some of these dead towns? Pisa is one of them. No sooner have you entered it than you feel an irresistible languor, a powerless desire to run away, at the same time

wishing to stay, a listless longing to go, and still remain to enjoy forever the mournful sweetness of its atmosphere, its sky, its streets and houses, in which live the most quiet, the most mournful and silent of people. Life seems to have left it when the sea receded, destroying the once powerful seaport, and in its place now grows a forest between the shore and the city. The river Arno glides through it, with its yellowish waves undulating gently between high walls supporting the two principal promenades, where are rows of yellowish houses, some hotels, and a few unassuming palaces. On the wharf itself, where alone it breaks the sinuous curve of the river, the little chapel of Santa-Maria della Spina, which belongs to the French architecture of the thirteenth century, shows just above the water its wrought-iron profile.

Through the Via Santa-Maria one reaches the Duomo, or Cathedral.

For those men who can still feel the beauty and mystical power of monuments, assuredly nothing is more surprising and thrilling than this vast grassy square, hemmed in by high bulwarks, inclosing in their totally different attitudes the Duomo, the Campo Santo, the Baptistry, and the Leaning Tower.

When we reach the edge of this deserted and wild field, surrounded by old walls, suddenly before our eyes rise these enormous buildings of marble extraordinary in profile, in color, in harmonious and stately grace. We are amazed and overcome with admiration before the rarest and grandest sight that human art can offer to our gaze.

The Duomo holds our attention by its inexpressible harmony, the irresistible power of its proportions, and the grandeur of its *façade*. It is a basilica of the eleventh century, built in Tuscan style in white marble, with black and colored inlaid work. We do not experience, on seeing this all-perfect piece of architecture of the Roman-Italian order, the same awe that we feel in the presence of certain Gothic cathedrals, with their daring height, the charm of their graceful towers and belfries, and all the stone lace-work in which they are enveloped. But we remain entranced with the irreproachable proportions, the beauty of the lines, of the forms, of the decorations of the *façade* below, of the pilasters joined by arcades above, of four galleries of columns, each row growing smaller, so that the attraction of the monument reminds you of a beautiful poem.

It is useless to describe these things; one must see them, and see them under this classical sky, of a peculiar blue, where the clouds, rolling about in silver masses, seemed copied from the paintings of Tuscan artists. For these old artists were realists, after all, imbued with the Italian atmosphere; and those that have imitated them under another sky are only art-counterfeiters.

Behind the Cathedral, the Tower, forever leaning over as if about to fall, gives one an uncomfortable feeling, upsetting our sense of equilibrium; and facing it is the Baptistry, which, with its tall conical cupola, stands before the door of the Campo Santo.

And in this ancient cemetery, whose frescoes are paintings of the greatest interest, stretches out a delightful cloister, with a subtle and gloomy charm,

in the midst of which two lime-trees hide under their greenery such a quantity of dead wood that the wind rattles it with a strange sound of dead bones.

The days go by — summer is drawing to an end. I wish to see a far-away country, where other men have left memories, less vivid perhaps, but memories that will also be eternal. These people, indeed, are the ones that have endowed their country with a Universal Exposition that will always be visited in the centuries to come.

## IV.

### Sicily

The French are under the impression that Sicily is a wild country, difficult of access, and even dangerous to explore. Now and then some traveler, who is thought very daring, ventures as far as Palermo, and returns with the information that it is a very interesting town. But what makes Palermo and all Sicily so interesting? No one can explain. To tell the truth, this is only a question of custom. This island, a jewel of the Mediterranean, is not on the list of those countries usually visited by tourists, which it is considered in good taste to know. It is not, like Italy, part of the education of a well-bred man.

From two special points of view, however, Sicily should attract travelers, because its natural and artistic beauties are as singular as they are wonderful. We know how fruitful and full of life is this land, which was called the granary of Italy, and which nations invaded and mastered one after the other—

so strong was their desire to possess it; which was the cause of so many men fighting and dying for her sake, as they would for a beautiful woman ardently desired. Like Spain, it is the country of oranges, whose fragrance fills the air in springtime. And every night it kindles, high above the sea the monster lantern of Etna, the largest volcano in Europe. But what constitutes, above all, a land unique and most interesting in this world, is that it is, from one end to the other, a strange and divine museum of architecture.

In this country, still artistic, architecture is dead, in the sense that it seems lost, the gift of creating beautiful things with stone, the mysterious secret of the attraction of lines, the sense of charm in movements. We seem not to understand any more than even the simple proportions of a wall can convey to the mind the same artistic delight, the same deep and secret rapture, that one feels in the presence of a masterpiece of Rembrandt, of Velasquez, or of Paul Veronese.

Sicily had the good fortune to be occupied by prolific nations, who came now from the north and now from the south and covered its territory with works of infinite variety, where mingle, in an unexpected and charming manner, the most contrary influences. From this has sprung a special art, unknown elsewhere, where the influence of the Arab is felt, in the midst of Greek and even Egyptian memories, where the harshness of the Gothic style brought here by the Normans is tempered by the wonderful art of Byzantine ornamentation and decoration.

And it is a delightful pastime to look for the special marks of each school, in these exquisite monuments, to discriminate between the detail from Egypt, like the lanceolated ogives, brought by the Arabs, the vaults in high relief or rather pendentive, resembling the stalactites of marine grottoes, and that of the genuine Byzantine ornament, or the beautiful Gothic friezes, which awaken the memory of the tall cathedrals of colder countries, or the churches built by Norman kings.

After seeing these monuments, which, though belonging to different periods and being of different origin, still have the same character, the same nature, one can say that they are neither Gothic, nor Arabic, nor Byzantine, but Sicilian; one can assert that there is a Sicilian art and style, forever recognizable, which is assuredly the most delightful, the most varied, more highly colored and full of conceptions, than all the other styles of architecture. It is also in Sicily that the most magnificent and complete examples of ancient Greek architecture can be found, in the midst of scenery of peerless beauty.

It is an easy passage from Naples to Palermo. One is astonished, on leaving the boat, at the activity and life of this city of two hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants, which is filled with shops, and although it is less animated than Naples it is still quite as lively. One is attracted, at first, by the carts. These are little square boxes perched on yellow wheels, decorated with crude and odd paintings, representing historical facts, adventures of all kinds, contests, and even the meetings of sovereigns, but especially the battles of Napoleon the First, and those of the Crusaders. A

peculiarly shaped piece of wood and iron secures the body of the cart to the axle; and the spokes of the wheels are also fretwork. The animal that draws it wears an ornament on his head, and another in the middle of the back, and is harnessed with coquettish, colored leather straps, decorated with red wood and tiny bells. These painted carts passing through the streets, so queer and all unlike each other, are attractive to the eye, as they stroll about, looking like puzzles we try to solve.

The appearance of Palermo is peculiar. The town, lying in the midst of a vast circle of bare-looking mountains of a grayish blue, tinted here and there with red, is divided into four parts by two long, straight streets, forming a cross in the middle. From this crossroad, we see, on three sides, the mountain at the end of the immense corridors of houses, and on the fourth the sea, a deep blue spot, which appears to be quite close, as if the town had tumbled into it!

I was haunted, on the day of my arrival, by a wish to see the Chapel Palatine, which I had been told was a marvel of marvels. This chapel, the most beautiful in the world, the most surprising religious jewel ever evolved by the human mind and executed by the hand of an artist, is inclosed within the heavy edifice of the Palais-Royal, an ancient fortress built by the Normans.

This chapel has no exterior. As we enter the palace we are immediately struck with the beauty of the interior court, which is surrounded by columns. A beautiful winding staircase gives a perspective of a startling, because unexpected, effect. Facing the en-

trance door, another door, cut through the wall of the palace, opens suddenly on a deep and narrow horizon, revealing an endless expanse of country and boundless vistas, which greet the eye through this arched gap, and carry it away with irresistible force toward the blue crest of the hills in the distance, above an immense orange grove.

On entering the chapel, we are overcome with awe on beholding a most surprising sight, whose potency is felt before it is thoroughly understood. The calm beauty and attractiveness of this little chapel, which is positively the most wonderful masterpiece of its kind, causes one to stand entranced before these walls covered with immense mosaics on a golden background, shining with a soft light that dimly illumines the whole edifice, leading one's mind into biblical and heavenly landscapes, where one sees, standing against a burning sky, all those who were associated with the life of Christ.

The strong impression produced by these Sicilian monuments comes from the fact that the art of decoration is more striking at first sight than that of architecture. The harmony of the lines and of the proportions is only a frame for the blending of colors. On entering our Gothic cathedrals, we experience a stern, almost gloomy, sensation. Their grandeur is impressive; they are striking in their stateliness; but they do not captivate us. Here we are conquered, affected by that almost sensual impression which color adds to the beauty of form.

The men who conceived and executed these luminous though dim churches, must have had an entirely different idea of the religious feeling from

that of the architects of German and French cathedrals; and their particular concern was that the light should enter these wondrously decorated naves in such a way that it would neither be seen nor felt, but would glide in imperceptibly, producing mysterious and delightful effects, as if the light came from the walls themselves, or from the deep golden ceiling peopled with apostles.

The Chapel Palatine, built in 1132 by King Roger II., after the Norman-Gothic style, is a small basilica with three naves. It is only one hundred feet long by forty feet wide, and is a gem, a basilica jewel. Two rows of beautiful marble columns, of different colors, lead to the cupola, where a colossal figure of Christ, surrounded by angels with outstretched wings, is looking down. The mosaic which fills the back of the lateral chapel, on the left is a striking piece of art. It represents St. John preaching in the desert. One would say it was by Puvis de Chavannes, but more highly colored, more powerful, truer, and better chosen, executed at a time of deep religious faith, by an inspired artist. The apostle is speaking to a few people; behind him is the desert, and, beyond that, a few blue mountains, whose soft outlines are lost in the mist,—those mountains so well known to all who have traveled in the Orient. Above the saint, around and behind him, is a golden and marvelous sky, where God seems to abide.

Returning to the entrance, we stop under the pulpit, a simple square of red marble, surrounded by a frieze of white marble, inlaid with small mosaics, and supported on four columns delicately chiseled. And one wonders at what taste can accomplish, the true

taste of an artist with such slight materials. The effect of these churches comes, however, from the contrast of the marbles and mosaics; in this lies their chief attraction. The lower walls, which are white and are decorated with small designs in fine stone embroideries, bring out forcibly, by the very fact of their simplicity, the wealth of color in the large paintings above.

But we discover, even in that small lace-work running along the lower wall, delightful things that could be held in the hollow of the hand; for instance, two peacocks, whose beaks are intertwined, carrying a cross between them. This style of decoration is to be found in many churches in Palermo. The mosaics of the Martorana are perhaps even more remarkable in their execution than those of the Palatine Chapel; but one cannot find, in any other monument, the wonderful ensemble which makes this divine masterpiece unique.

I came back slowly to the Hotel of the Palms, which has one of the finest gardens in the city,—the gardens of tropical countries, filled with enormous and strange plants. A traveler, seated on a bench, gives me in a few words the events of the past year, and going back to the memories of by-gone years, he says, among other things: "This happened when Wagner lived here." Astonished at this, I said: "What, here, in this hotel?" "Why, yes, it was while here that he wrote the last notes of 'Parsifal' and corrected the proofs."

And I am told that the illustrious German master spent a whole winter in Palermo, and that he left this town only a few months before his death. Here,

as everywhere else where he ever lived, he showed his ungovernable temper and unendurable pride, while he left the impression of being the most unsociable of men. I wished to see the room occupied by this musical genius, for it seemed to me something must still remain of his strong personality — that I would perhaps find some beloved object, a favorite chair, or the table he worked at, surely some trace of his sojourn here. I saw at first just a fine hotel room. I was shown the changes he had made here and there, the couch in the middle of the room, which he covered with brilliant rugs worked in gold. Then I opened the door of a mirrored cabinet. A delicious and powerful perfume blew out, like the caress of a breeze passing over a field of roses. The owner of the place, who was my guide, said: "He kept his clothes in here, after perfuming them with essence of roses. This odor will never evaporate." I inhaled this breath of flowers, inclosed in this piece of furniture, forgotten here, a captive; and it seemed, in truth, as if I had found something of Wagner, in this perfume which he loved — a little of his personality, of his desires, of his soul, in this mere trifle, of the secret and beloved habits which are the making of the intimate life of a man. I then went out and wandered through the town.

No one is less like a Neapolitan than a Sicilian. In the lower class, one finds a Neapolitan three-fourths jack-in-the-box. He gesticulates, bustles about, becomes excited without cause, expresses himself by gestures as well as by words, is always amiable, as if taking an interest in what concerns you; gracious through cunning as well as by na-

ture, he always answers by pleasant words the most disagreeable things said to him. But in the Sicilian one sees a great deal of the Arab. He has his sedateness of manner, combined with the liveliness of the Italian. His native pride, his love of titles, the very nature of his pride, and even his features, make him more like a Spaniard than like an Italian. But that which gives to one setting foot in Sicily the impression of the Orient, is the peculiar voice, the nasal intonation of the street-criers. One hears everywhere this shrill note of the Arab, which seems to come down from the forehead to the throat, instead of, as in the north, rising from the chest to the mouth. And the drawling song, monotonous and soft, heard through the open door of a house as we pass by, is surely the same, as to rhythm and accent, as that sung by the rider clothed in white, who guides travelers through the endless and bare regions of the desert.

At the theater, though, the Sicilian becomes thoroughly Italianized, and it is very interesting to assist in Rome, in Naples, or Palermo, at an operatic performance. Every impression of the public is expressed as soon as felt. Excessively nervous, gifted with an ear as true as it is sensitive, loving music to distraction, the entire audience becomes a sort of vibrating animal, which feels but cannot reason. In five minutes it will applaud an actor with enthusiasm and hiss him with frenzy; it stamps with joy or with rage, and if a false note falls from the throat of the singer, a strange cry, exasperated and in a high key, bursts from every voice at the same time. When opinions differ, the hissing and cheering are deafen-

ing. Nothing is allowed to pass unnoticed by these attentive and quivering listeners, who express their feelings every moment, and sometimes, seized with sudden anger, roar as would a menagerie of wild animals. "Carmen," just now fascinates the Sicilian people, and one hears from morning till night the famous Toreador air hummed in the streets.

The streets of Palermo are not remarkable in any way. They are wide and well-kept in the rich sections, but in the poorer ones they are like the narrow lanes, winding and tortuous, of all Oriental towns. The women, dressed in gowns of red, blue, or yellow, sit chatting before their doors, watching passers-by with their brilliant black eyes shining under a forest of dark hair.

Sometimes, in front of the building of the official lottery, which is in permanent use, like a religious service, and from which the State draws a large dividend, we witness a typical, if comical, incident. Facing this building is a Madonna in its niche, with a lantern burning at its feet. A man comes out of the office, his lottery ticket in hand, puts a sou in the sacred box that opens its little black cavity before the statue, and then makes the sign of the cross with the numbered paper he has just intrusted to the care of the Virgin, hoping that this paltry offering will bring him luck.

We stop here and there to look at photographic views of Sicily, and my eye is attracted by a strange picture representing a vault full of dead bodies, grinning skeletons, oddly clothed. I read underneath: "Cemetery of the Capuchin Friars." What can this be? If you ask a native of Palermo, he answers

with disgust: "Do not go to see that horror. It is a barbarous thing, which will soon disappear, thank goodness! However, no one has been buried there for some years now." Only with difficulty can one obtain any precise and detailed information on the subject, such is the horror Sicilians have of these extraordinary catacombs. This is what I learned finally: The ground on which the convent of the Capuchin Friars is built possesses the peculiar property of hastening the decomposition of dead flesh, so that in a year there is nothing left on the bones but a dried, black skin, which clings to them, retaining sometimes the hair of the head and cheeks. The coffins are inclosed in small lateral vaults, each one containing eight or ten bodies, and when the year is passed the coffins are opened, from which are taken these horrible mummies, bearded and convulsed, as if howling in awful pain. Then they are hung up in one of the principal galleries, where the family can come to see them from time to time. People who wished to have their bodies preserved in this manner, asked for it before they died, and they will remain forever lined up under these dim vaults, like objects kept in museums, in consideration of a stipulated sum paid annually by the relatives. When the latter cease to pay, the bodies are buried in the usual manner.

Immediately I was possessed by a strong desire to visit this sinister collection of departed beings. At the door of a small convent of most unpretending appearance, an old Capuchin friar, clad in a brown robe, received and preceded me without a word, knowing full well what strangers come here to see. We cross a poor chapel, and we go down with slow

steps a stone staircase, and, suddenly, I see before me an immense gallery, high and wide, whose walls are covered with skeletons, clothed in the strangest and most grotesque fashion. Some are hung far up, side by side, others lie on five tables of stone, one over the other, from the floor to the ceiling. A row of dead bodies is on the ground, a solid row, whose horrible heads seem about to speak. Some are overrun by a hideous vegetation, which distorts the bones and the jaws, and others again retain their hair, others a bit of mustache or a wisp of beard. Some look upward with their empty eyes, others look down; here are some that appear to grin horribly, and others that are contorted as if in pain; others again seem affrighted as if by some supernatural fear. And they are all clothed, these hideous and ridiculous dead, clothed by their families, who have had them taken from their coffins and placed in this frightful assemblage. Nearly all have some sort of black robe, the hood of which is sometimes drawn over the head. But some are dressed sumptuously; a miserable skeleton with a headdress consisting of a cap of Greek embroideries, and wrapped in a dressing-gown, like that of a man of wealth, lies on its back, as if sleeping a terrifying though comical sleep. A placard, like that a blind man carries, hangs from the neck, bearing the name and the date of death. These last give one a shiver, for they read: 1880—1881—1882. This, then, was a man eight years ago! It lived, laughed, spoke, ate, and drank, and was full of joy and hope. And now!

Before this double row of lifeless beings coffins and boxes are piled up; some are expensive coffins,

in ebony, with brass ornaments and small, square glass openings. One would think they were traveling-boxes, bought in some shop by those going on the long voyage, as people used to say.

Other galleries open to the right and left, indefinitely lengthening out this subterranean cemetery. Here are the women, who are still more ridiculous than the men, for their relatives have tried to dress them coquettishly. The heads look at you, squeezed in lace and be-ribboned bonnets, seemingly white as snow, around those black faces decayed and worn away by the strange workings of the earth. The hands, resembling the roots of a tree, peep out from the sleeves of a new robe, and the stockings that inclose the bones of the leg seem empty. Sometimes the skeleton has only shoes on, great big shoes for the poor dried-up feet.

Here are the young girls, the hideous young girls, in their white garments, with a crown of metal on the forehead, signifying innocence. They look old, with their grinning faces. They are sixteen, eighteen, or twenty. It is horrible!

We then reach a gallery filled with little glass coffins. These are the children. The bones barely formed have not resisted the elements. And it is hard to make out what one really sees, such is the distorted and fearful appearance presented by these wretched little beings. But you are moved to tears, for the mothers have dressed them carefully in the last garments they wore on earth; and the parents come to see them once more, these beloved children!

In many instances a photograph hangs above the skeleton, showing the child as it looked in life, and

nothing is so startling as this contrast evoked by this comparison of the two.

We cross a still darker and lower gallery, which is reserved for the poor. In a dark corner are apparently about twenty of them, hung up under a transom, through which blows the outer air in fitful gusts. They are clothed in a sort of black linen, tied at the neck and feet, and they all lean over one another. They look as if they were shivering with cold, and as if they were trying to break away, crying out "Help!" It might be the drowned crew of some ship, still buffeted about by the wind, clad in the brown and tarred oilskins worn by the sailors in a storm.

And now comes the part set aside for the priests, a long gallery of honor. At first sight, they are even worse to look at than the others, clothed in their sacred vestments — black, red, or purple. But, on nearer view, they simply excite a nervous feeling of ridicule, as they stand in the strangest and most comical attitudes. Here are some that look as if about to sing; others are in a praying position, their hands crossed and their heads raised. Some wear the biretta of an officiating priest, which, placed on the fleshless brow, now and again falls over the ear or on the nose. It is the carnival of death, rendered more ludicrous still by the gilded glory of the sacerdotal garments. Now and then, it is said, some of the heads roll to the ground, the cords of the neck having been gnawed away by the mice. Thousands of these rodents live within the human charnel house.

I was shown the remains of a man who died in 1882. A few months previous, when full of life and

happy, he had come here accompanied by a friend, and had laughingly remarked: "My place will be there," pointing out a certain spot. The friend comes here alone now, and gazes for hours at a time at the motionless skeleton standing there.

On certain feast-days, the catacombs of the Capuchin Friars are opened to the public. A drunkard once fell asleep here, and awoke in the night. He called, shrieking with fright and running about on all sides and trying to escape, but no one heard him. He was found next morning, clinging so tightly to the bar of the entrance gate that he was removed with difficulty. He had become insane. Since that day an enormous bell has hung near the doorway.

After leaving this sinister spot, I felt that I must see something pleasant, so I was driven to the Villa, whose gardens, lying in a forest of orange-trees, are filled with magnificent tropical plants.

On returning to Palermo, I saw to the left, a small town about halfway up a hill, and on the summit a ruin. This town is Monreale, and the ruin is that of Castellaccio, the last refuge of the Sicilian brigands, I was told.

Théodore de Banville wrote a treatise on French prose, which should be mastered by all who attempt to make words rhyme. One of the chapters of this very good book is entitled: "Poetical licenses," and on turning the pages, we read: "There are none." Thus, on reaching Sicily, we ask sometimes from idle curiosity, again with anxiety: "Where are the brigands?" and everyone answers: "There are none." There have been none, it is true, for five or six years. Thanks to the complicity of some landed proprietors,

whose interests they served as often as they plundered them, they managed to exist in the mountains of Sicily until the arrival of General Palavicini, who is still the commanding officer in Palermo. This man pursued them with such energy that the last of them disappeared in a short time. It is true that there are often attacks by armed men, and assassinations are frequent still; but these are crimes committed by lone criminals, and not by organized bands, as formerly. On the whole, Sicily is as safe a country for any traveler as England, France, Germany, or Italy, and those who are seeking adventures of the *Fra Diavolo* sort, had better look elsewhere. In truth, man is safer anywhere than in large towns. If one could count the number of travelers held up and plundered by bandits in wild countries, and those assassinated by the wandering tribes of the desert, and if we compared the accidents that happen in these places, reputed so dangerous, with those that occur in a month in London, Paris, or New York, we should find how comparatively safe these dreaded regions are. Moral: If you are looking for cut-throats, go to Paris or London, but do not come to Sicily. In this country we can go about the highways day and night without an escort and unarmed; we meet none that is not gracious to strangers, excepting, perhaps, the men employed by the post and telegraph offices. I say this, however, only for those of Catania.

About halfway up one of the mountains, which overlooks Palermo, is a little town called Monreale, famous for its ancient monuments; and in the vicinity of this place the last brigands were to be found. The practice of placing sentinels along the road that

leads to it is still in force. Is this to reassure travelers or to frighten them? I do not know.

The soldiers, met at every turn in the road, remind one of the legendary sentinel of the War Minister in France. For ten years, without any known reason, a soldier was always placed on sentry duty, in the corridor leading to the Minister's apartments, with orders to keep passers-by away from the wall. Now it happened that a new Minister, of an inquisitive turn of mind, on succeeding fifty others who had passed this functionary without any inquiry whatever, asked wherefrom came this custom. No one could tell him, neither the Cabinet Minister nor any of his colleagues. But the usher, who was gifted with a good memory, probably writing his memoirs, recalled to mind that a soldier had been put there in days gone by, because the wall had been freshly painted and the Minister's wife, not having been cautioned, ruined her gown. The paint had dried, but the sentinel still remained.

And so the brigands have disappeared, but the sentinels are still to be seen on the road to Monreale. This road runs around the mountain and finally reaches the city, which is very strange, highly colored, and ill kept. The streets are in steps, and are paved with square stones. The men wear a red handkerchief bound about their heads, after the Spanish fashion.

The Cathedral, more than three hundred feet long, is in the shape of a Maltese cross, with three apses and three naves, divided by eighteen columns of Oriental granite, resting on a base of white marble and a pedestal of gray marble. The portal is truly

magnificent, with gorgeous bronze doors, designed by "Bonannus, civis Pisanus."

The interior of this building displays, in the way of decorations of mosaic with gold background, the most complete, the richest, and the most startling work of the kind ever seen. These mosaics, the largest in Sicily, cover the walls entirely—a surface of 19,200 feet. It is almost impossible to imagine these immense and superb decorations, which present, through the length and breadth of the church, the mythical stories of the Old Testament, of the Messiah, and of the apostles. On a golden sky, which shows a wide horizon round the naves, we see, larger than life-size, the prophets announcing the coming of the Redeemer; then, Christ himself and those who lived in His time.

Back of the choir, an immense figure of Jesus, whose features resemble those of Francis the First, towers over the whole church, seeming to fill it entirely, so large and impressive is this strange picture.

It is to be regretted that the ceiling, which was destroyed by fire, should have been redecorated in the crudest manner. The loud tone of the colors is very displeasing.

Quite close to the Cathedral, we enter the old cloister of the Benedictines. Let these who care for cloisters go and walk through this one, and they will immediately forget all others ever seen before.

How could anyone not worship in these quiet places, closed and cool, invented, it seems, for inspiring thought, deep and true—thoughts that flow freely from the lips, as one walks with slow, measured steps under these long, melancholy arcades. How

appropriate they seem for daydreams, these stone paths with small columns, inclosing a garden, which rests the eye without causing it to wander, without diverting one's attention.

The cloisters of France possess something sad in their monastic austerity, even the most attractive of them, like Saint Wandrille, in Normandy. They cause a tightening of the heart, and sadden the soul. And as for the cloister of the Chartreuse, in Verne, in the wild mountains of the Maures, it strikes a chill to the very marrow of one's bones. The wonderful cloister of Monreale, on the contrary, gives you such a charming sensation that you wish to remain in it for an indefinite time. It is very large, square, and possessed of great charm; no one that has not seen it can even understand the harmony of a colonnade. The exquisite proportions, the incredible slenderness of all these slight columns, as they stand two-by-two, each pair different, some in mosaics and others plain,—these covered with sculptures of peerless delicacy and those ornamented with a simple design in stone, which climbs up and around, like creeping ivy,—astonish, then charm one, producing that artistic delight that one feels in a perfect taste. And, like these delicate columns, the capitals also are of charming and varied designs. It is marvelous to note the admirable effect of the whole, and the perfection of every detail. One cannot view this masterpiece of artistic beauty without recalling the verses of Victor Hugo on the Greek artist who could put

> "Something as beautiful as the human smile,
> On the profile of the Propylæa."

This beautiful walk is inclosed between very high and very old walls, with pointed arcades; it is now all that is left of the convent.

Sicily is the birthplace, the true and only country, of colonnades. The interior courts of the old palaces and houses of Palermo contain some that are beautiful, which would be renowned anywhere, but particularly so in this island so rich in monuments. The small cloister of the Church of San Giovanni degli Eremiti, one of the oldest churches in Normandy, which is of Oriental character, though less remarkable than that of Monreale, is still superior to any in existence.

On leaving the convent, we enter the garden, whence we look down on a valley of orange blossoms. An incessant breeze arises from this perfumed forest, a breeze that enraptures alike the mind and the senses. The uncertain and poetical craving that forever haunts the soul, prowling about, maddening and unattainable, here seems on the point of being realized. This odor surrounds you, mingling the refined sensation of perfumes with the artistic joys of the mind, throws you for a few seconds into a state of thought and body that is almost happiness.

On raising my eyes toward the high mountain, towering above the town, I perceive on its summit the ruin I had noticed before. A friend, who is with me, questions the natives, who answer that this old castle was the last refuge of the Sicilian brigands. And to-day very few persons ever climb to this ancient fortress, called Castellaccio. The path, on a hill difficult of access, is barely known. But we wished to go, and one of the gentlemen of Palermo,

who insists on doing the honors of his country, gives us a guide. Not being able to find one who is sure of the way, he applied without our knowledge to the chief of police, and in a short time a man of whose calling we were ignorant began the ascent of the mountain with us. But he hesitates on the way and, meeting another man, asks him to join us, another guide to guide the first one. And both inquire of the natives we encounter — of some women driving a donkey. Finally, a curé we meet advises our walking straight ahead. And we continue to climb, followed by our so-called guides. The road becomes impracticable. We must scale rocks, lifting ourselves by the strength of our arms and this lasts a long while. A burning sun meanwhile pours down on us. We finally reach the summit, where the castle is buried in a wonderful chaos of enormous gray stones, smooth or sharp-pointed, which surround it and spread far out on all sides of the walls.

The view from this height is wonderful. All round this bristling hill are deep valleys inclosed by other hills, showing toward the interior of Sicily an endless horizon of peaks and summits. Facing us is the sea; at our feet lies Palermo. The city is surrounded by that forest of orange-trees which has been called "the Shell of Gold," and this forest of black verdure spreads like a dark stain at the foot of grayish and reddish mountains, which seem burned, consumed and gilded by the sun, so bare and yellow are they.

One of our guides has disappeared, the other follows us into the ruins. These have a wild beauty, and are quite large, and on going through them you

feel that no one ever comes here. Everywhere the ground sounds hollow beneath our feet; sometimes we see the entrance to subterranean passages. The man examines them with curious eyes, and tells us that a great many brigands lived there a few years ago. This was their safest refuge, and the one most dreaded. As we are about to descend, the first guide reappears, but we decline his services, and find without any difficulty a very easy path which could even be used by women.

The Sicilians appear to have taken pleasure in exaggerating and multiplying stories of bandits to frighten strangers, and to-day travelers hesitate to land on this island, which is as quiet and as safe as Switzerland.

Here is one of the last adventures credited to these evildoers. I can guarantee the truth of it: A celebrated entomologist of Palermo, Mr. Ragusa, discovered a beetle that was often mistaken for the *Polyphylla Olivieri*. A learned German, Mr. Kraatz, knowing that it belonged to a particular species, was very anxious to possess a few specimens, and so wrote to one of his friends in Sicily, Mr. di Stephani, who in his turn asked Mr. Giuseppe Miraglia to procure a few of these insects for him. But they had disappeared from that part of the coast. Just at that time Mr. Lombardo Martorana, from Trapani, sent word to Mr. di Stephani that he had captured more than fifty of these *Polyphyllæ*. Mr. di Stephani hastened to notify Mr. Miraglia in the following letter:

"My dear Joseph: The *Polyphylla Oliveri*, having had wind of your murderous intentions, has taken another route and has found refuge on the coast of Trapani, where my friend Lombardo has already captured fifty of these individuals."

Just here the adventure takes on the tragi-comical appearance of an improbable epic. About this time the country about Trapani was being ransacked by a brigand called Lombardo. It happened that Mr. Miraglia threw his friend's letter into the wastepaper basket, which in turn was emptied out in the street by the servant. The scavenger carried its contents out into the fields, where a peasant, seeing a lovely blue paper, barely rumpled, picked it up and put it into his pocket, partly through weariness and partly from a natural dislike to see anything wasted. Several months later this man was called to the tax-office, and this paper slipped from his pocket to the ground. A gendarme pounced upon it, gave it to the judge, who read the words: "murderous intentions," "taken another route," "refuge," "captured," "Lombardo." The peasant was imprisoned, questioned, and threatened, but he could only tell how he came by the paper. He was kept a prisoner, and strict inquiry was made into the matter. The judges published the letter; but, as the words appeared in print *Petronilla Olivieri*, instead of *Polyphylla*, the entomologists never gave it a thought. Finally, Mr. di Stephani's signature was deciphered and he was haled to court. His explanations were not believed. Mr. Miraglia, who was also called, finally cleared up the mystery. The peasant, in the meantime, had been in jail three months.

So it turned out that one of the last famous brigands of Sicily was, in reality, a sort of beetle, known to men of science under the name of *Polyphylla Ragusa*.

To-day there is no danger whatever in traveling

through this dreaded Sicily, in carriages, on horseback, or even on foot. All the most interesting excursions, however, can be made almost entirely by carriage. The first one to be taken is that to the temple of Segesta.

So many poets have sung the praises of Greece that each of us carries a picture of it in his mind; we all believe we know it a little, we all see it in a dream as we wish it to be. For me, Sicily has realized this dream; and when I think of that artistic country I picture to my mind tall mountains, with soft classical outlines, and on their summits those stern-looking temples, somewhat massive, perhaps, but admirably majestic, which one meets everywhere in that island.

Everyone has seen Pæstum and admired the three superb ruins scattered on this bare plain, bounded by the sea in the distance and inclosed on the other side by a large circle of bluish hills. But if the Temple of Neptune is in better condition and in purer style (so it is said) than the temples of Sicily, these are placed in such unexpected, marvelous landscapes that words cannot render the impression they make on the mind.

On leaving Palermo, we first reach the vast forest of orange-trees called the Shell of Gold; then the railway follows a beach of reddish mountains and rocks. The road finally leads toward the interior of the island, and we leave the train at the station of Alcamo-Calatafimi.

Then we go through a country that waves here and there like the swell of a motionless sea. There are no trees, but plenty of vines and cultivated fields,

and the road lies through two uninterrupted rows of blossoming aloes. It looks as if, at a word, they had all grown to the same height, forming the thick and strange column sung by so many poets. We can see, as far as the eye can reach, a multitude of these war-like plants, which are thick and sharp-pointed, carrying with them, as it were, the weapons and banner of battle.

After two hours of traveling, we suddenly perceive two high mountains, joined by an easy path, shaped like a crescent, which rises between their summits, and in the middle of this crescent is the profile of a Greek temple, one of those impressive and beautiful monuments that a bygone artistic nation erected to its human gods.

We must go around one of these hills by a winding road, and then we see the temple once more, but this time we get a full view of it. Seen from here it appears as if leaning on the mountain itself, from which it is, in reality, divided by a deep ravine; but the mountain spreads behind and above it, infolds and surrounds it, as if sheltering it. It stands out distinctly, with its thirty-six Doric columns against the green draperies, which form a background for this enormous monument, standing alone in this solitary country.

One feels, on seeing this magnificent landscape, that nothing but a Greek temple could be erected here, and only here would it be in touch with its surroundings. The master decorators who have taught humanity their art have shown, especially in Sicily, what deep and refined science they brought to bear on the setting and effect of their work. This temple

of Segesta was placed at the foot of the mountain by a man of genius, who appears to have been inspired as to the exact position it should occupy. It gives life to the wide landscape; it fills it with animation and makes it divinely beautiful.

On the mountain top, whose base we followed to reach the temple, we find the ruins of a theater.

When one is traveling in a country that the Greeks have inhabited or colonized, it is only necessary to find their theaters to get the finest points of view. If they set their temples just where they could show to the best advantage, where they were an ornament to the landscape, they placed their theaters, on the contrary, where the eye would be enraptured by the perspective. That of Segesta, on the crest of a mountain, is the center of an amphitheater of small mountains, whose circumference is from 150 to 200 kilometers. There are still more summits behind these, and through a wide valley facing us we behold the sea, which is a deep blue in the midst of all this green.

The day following the visit to Segesta we went to see Selinonte, an immense pile of columns that have fallen in a row, side by side, like dead soldiers, or else in a crumpled heap. The ruins of these giant temples, the greatest in Europe, fill a large plain and also cover a small hill beyond that. They follow the beach, a long beach of light-colored sand, where are moored a few fishing-smacks, without any place in sight that fishermen might inhabit. This shapeless heap of stones, however, can only be of interest to archæologists or to poetical souls affected by the footsteps of time.

But Girgenti, the ancient Agrigentum, placed like Selinonte on the southern coast of Sicily, offers the most extraordinary collection of temples that it can be given anyone to see.

At the side of a long hill, stony, barren, and of a reddish tint, without a blade of grass or a shrub, and overlooking the sea, the beach, and the seaport, three magnificent stone temples are silhouetted from below against the blue of the southern sky. They appear to stand on air, in the midst of a grand though desolate landscape. Everything around them is lifeless. The sun has burned and destroyed the earth. Is it the sun, after all, that has bleached the soil in this manner, or the deep fire that forever burns in the veins of this volcanic island? For all about Girgenti is the peculiar country of the sulphur mines. Everything about here is sulphurous — the earth, the stones, and even the sand.

The temples, the eternal abode of the gods who are dead, remain on their wild hills, with only a distance of half a kilometer between them. First, there is the Juno Lacinienne, which contained, it is said, the famous painting of Juno by Zeuxis, who had for models the five most beautiful girls of Acragas. Then the Temple of the Concord, one of the temples of antiquity still in the best state of preservation, which was used as a church in the Middle Ages. Farther on are the ruins of the Temple of Hercules; and finally the gigantic Temple of Jupiter, praised by Polybius, and described by Diodorus. It was built in the fifth century and contains thirty-eight half-columns, eighteen feet in circumference. A man can stand erect in each fluting.

Seated on the roadside, which runs along the foot of this wonderful hill, we call to mind, before these admirable mementos, the most artistic of all nations. It seems as if the whole of Olympus were before us, the Olympus of Homer, and the Greek poets, the Olympus of charming, carnal gods, who were of the same clay and as passionate as we are, who impersonated, in a poetical manner, the tender love of our hearts, the dreams of our souls, and all the instincts of our senses.

Antiquity itself rears its head against this ancient sky. A powerful and strange feeling comes over us, a desire to kneel before the august remains left here by the masters of our masters.

Surely, this Sicily is, first of all, a god-like land; for if we find these last abodes of Juno, Jupiter, Mercury, or Hercules, we also meet with the most remarkable Christian churches in the world. And the memory of the cathedrals of Cefalu or Monreale, and of the Palatine Chapel, that marvel of marvels, remains even deeper and more powerful than that of the Greek monuments.

At the end of the hill of the temples of Girgenti begins a most extraordinary country, which might be the Kingdom of Satan; for if, as was formerly believed, the devil inhabited a vast subterranean region, filled with melting sulphur, where he boiled the souls of the damned, then it is assuredly in Sicily that he elected to have his mysterious abode. Sicily supplies almost the whole world with sulphur. There are thousands of mines in this island of fire.

First of all, a few kilometers from the town, we come across a strange little hillock, called Maccàluba,

composed of clay and limestone and covered with small cones two or three feet high. One would think they were blisters, some anomalous malady of nature, for from them flows a warm mud, as if the soil were suppurating; and at times they hurl stones to a considerable height, roaring and throwing out foul gases. They seem to growl, these horrible leprous little volcanoes, these running sores.

We next visited the sulphur mines. As we enter the mountain, before us stretches a desolate country, a wretched soil, which appears to have been cursed and condemned by nature. The valleys, here and there, are gray, yellow, stony, and sinister, bearing the stigma of divine reprobation in their solitude and poverty. Finally we reach a few miserable, low buildings. Here are the mines. There are, it is said, more than a thousand in this part of the country.

On entering one of the inclosures, we notice at first, a singular hillock, grayish and smoky. It is a well of sulphur, erected by human hands. The sulphur extracted from the soil is black and mixed with earth, stones, etc., and becomes a kind of stiff and brittle stone. As soon as it is brought from the mines it is made into a sort of hillock, and a fire is built inside. Then this burns continuously, for weeks at a time, and melts the interior of this artificial mountain, from which the pure sulphur pours out like water, by means of a small canal. The produce thus obtained is put into vats, where it boils and becomes clear.

The mine where the extraction is made resembles all other mines. We go down a narrow staircase, of

enormous and uneven steps, into wells dug in sulphur. The floors, which are one above the other, communicate by large holes, which give air to the deepest ones. We choke, as if asphyxiated by the sulphurous emanations, and the horrible steam causes the heart to beat faster and a profuse perspiration to break out.

From time to time, we meet, climbing this rough staircase, children carrying baskets. They pant and groan, these poor little urchins, under their heavy load. They are ten or twelve years old, and they go up and down these steps fifteen times in a day, receiving a copper for each downward trip. They are small, thin, and yellow, with enormous and shining eyes; they have delicate features and very brilliant teeth. This revolting and inhuman method of utilizing children is one of the most painful things to be seen.

But on another side of the island, a few hours from the coast, is such a wonderful natural phenomenon that one forgets, on beholding it, the poisoned mines where children are slaughtered. I mean the island of the Volcano, this fantastic flower of sulphur, which blooms in mid-ocean.

We leave Messina at midnight, in a wretched steamboat, where the first-class passengers cannot even find a seat on deck. There is not a breath of air; the boat alone disturbs the stillness of the night. The shores of Sicily and those of Calabra exhale such a powerful odor of blossoming orange-trees that the whole of the channel is perfumed by it. We soon leave the city behind us, and pass between Scylla and Charybdis; the mountains about us are lower, and

above them appears the flat and snowy summit of Mount Etna, silvery in the light of the full moon.

We doze a little, lulled by the monotonous noise of the ship's paddles, and open our eyes to find it is already day. Opposite us are the Lipari Islands. The first on the left and the last on the right emit a thick white smoke. They are the Volcano and the Stromboli. Between these two volcanoes we see the Lipari, the Filicuri, the Alicuri, and a few other low and small islands.

The boat stops before the island and town of Lipari. There are just a few white houses, at the foot of a green hill. Nothing else, not even an inn, can be found, for strangers never land here. The place is fruitful and charming, surrounded by beautiful rocks of a peculiar shape and of a deep though soft red. There are mineral waters, which made it a popular resort in bygone days, but the Bishop Todaso had the baths destroyed, so as to remove his people from the wealth and influence of strangers.

Lipari ends on the north side in an unusually white mountain, which we should take for a mountain of snow were it in a colder country. This supplies pumice stone to the whole world.

I hired a boat with four oarsmen, to go and see the island of Volcano. Our route follows the fertile coast, which is planted with vines. The reflection of the red rocks in the blue sea is a strange sight. We pass through the little strait that divides the two islands. The crest of the island of Volcano rises above the waves, like a submerged crater. It is a small, uncultivated island, whose peak is about 1200 feet high, and it has a surface of twenty square

kilometers. We go around another small island, the Volcanello, which rose abruptly from the sea about the year 200 B. C., and is united to the larger island by a narrow strip of land, overflowed by the waves on stormy days.

We are now in a deep bay facing the smoking crater. At its foot is a house occupied by an Englishman, who is sleeping evidently, or else I could never climb this volcano, which this manufacturer is exploiting; but he sleeps, and so I cross a large kitchen garden, then some vineyards belonging to the Englishman, then again a forest of blossoming gorse. One would say it was a scarf of yellow, draped about the sharp cone, whose top is also of the same blinding color under the glare of the sun. I ascend by a narrow path, steep and slippery, winding through cinders and lava. As in Switzerland we sometimes see a stream falling from the top of a mountain, so here we find an unruffled cascade of sulphur that has poured out through the crevices. They are fairy-like streams of congealed light, the fluid rays of the sun.

I finally reached the crest, where a large platform surrounds the crater. The earth quakes, and in front of me, from an opening the size of a man's head, issues with terrific force an immense jet of flame and steam while from the edge of this hole pours the liquid sulphur, gilded by the fire. It forms immediately around this fantastical spring into a yellow lake. Farther away, other crevices throw out white vapors, which rise slowly in the blue atmosphere.

I advance with care on the hot cinders and lava, as far as the edge of the crater, and the most wonder-

ful sight here greets the eye. Deep in this immense well, called the Fossa, which is 1500 feet wide and about 600 feet deep, from a dozen giant fissures and round holes pour fire, smoke, and sulphur, with a noise as of a steam-engine. I go down the sides of this abyss and walk along the edge of the volcano. Everything is yellow round about and under our feet —a blinding, maddening, yellowish glare. The ground is yellow, the high walls, and even the sky itself. The yellow sun pours its brilliant light into this raging whirlpool; the heat from which burns like a scald. And the yellow liquid boils, and we see dazzling crystals and strange acids on the edge of this furnace.

The Englishman whom we left asleep at the foot of the hill, gathers, stores, and sells these acids and liquids—in fact, everything the crater throws up; for all this is worth money, a great deal of money.

I came back slowly, out of breath, panting, suffocated by the unendurable fumes of the volcano; and on climbing back to the summit I saw all the Lipari Islands scattered about on the waves. Far away, rises Stromboli; while behind me gigantic Etna appears to look down on its children and grand-children.

On reaching the boat I noticed an island hidden behind that of Lipari. The boatman called it Salina. From it is taken the Malmsey wine. I wished to drink from the spring itself a bottle of this famous wine. It is like a syrup of sulphur. It is the wine of volcanoes—thick, sweet, golden, and so full of sulphur that the taste remains for hours. It should be called the devil's drink. The wretched boat that brought me takes me back. At first I look at Strom-

boli, a high mountain whose summit smokes and whose base is deep in water. Clinging to its sides, I notice a few houses, which look like sea-shells. Then my eyes turn toward Sicily, which we are nearing, and I cannot see anything but Mount Etna, which seems to crush it down with its enormous weight, rearing its snow-covered head above all the other mountains on the island. They look like dwarfs, these other large mountains below it, and Mount Etna itself seems of low stature, such is its great massiveness. To realize thoroughly the size of this clumsy giant, one must see it from far out at sea.

To the left are the hilly shores of Calabria and the Strait of Messina, which looks like the mouth of a gulf. We pass through it, and presently enter the harbor. The city is uninteresting, and we leave on the same day for Catania. The steamer pursues its course along a most beautiful coast rounding wonderful gulfs where nestle little white villages on sandy beaches in deep bays. We are now at Taormina.

Were a man to spend but one day in Sicily, and should he ask: "What must one see?" I should not hesitate to answer: "Taormina." It is only a landscape, but a landscape where you find everything that can possibly appeal to the eye, the mind, and the imagination. The village rests on a tall mountain, as if it had tumbled down from the top; but we do not stop in it, although it contains some pretty relics of the past, and we reach the Greek temple to see the sunset.

I have said, speaking of the theater of Segesta, that the Greeks, incomparable decorators that they were, knew how to choose the one and only place

where theaters, those houses built for the pleasures of our artistic senses, should be erected. This one of Taormina is so marvelously well situated that there cannot be another spot in the world that can compare with it. After entering it, and going over the stage, the only one that has come down to us in a fair state of preservation, we climb the tumble-down and grass-grown steps that spectators formerly occupied, where 35,000 people could be seated: and we stand here and gaze at it all — at the ruins, which are melancholy though beautiful, at the charming columns, still white and crowned with their capitals; at the sea below us stretching out indefinitely, and at the beach with its enormous rocks, its golden sand, and its small white villages. And, towering above all this, to the right, filling half the sky with its huge mass, is Mount Etna, smoking and covered with snow.

Where are the nations to-day who would know how to accomplish such things? Where are the men who could erect, for the pleasure of the masses, a building such as this? These men of other days possessed a soul and eyes that were not like ours, and in their veins flowed with the blood something that has vanished — love and admiration of the Beautiful.

We go back to Catania, whence I wish to climb the volcano. Now and then, between two hills, we see it covered with a cloud of motionless vapor from its crater. All about us, the ground is of a bronze color and the train runs along on a beach of lava. But the monster is still distant, thirty-six or forty kilometers, perhaps. Now we realize its enormous size. From its black, cavernous mouth it has thrown

up, from time to time, a burning flow of bitumen, which, running down its gentle or rapid slopes, has filled valleys, buried villages, drowned men as a river would, and finally has ended at the sea, driving it back with great force. They have formed cliffs, mountains, and ravines, these slow waves so clammy and red; and as their color darkened when they were stiffening they have caused the soil all around this immense volcano to become blackened, full of crevices, of dents, of unseemly designs, caused by the vagaries of eruptions and the whimsical humor of the hot lava.

Sometimes Mount Etna remains inactive for centuries at a time, only blowing into the sky the ponderous smoke of its crater. Then, under the influence of sun and rain, the lavas of the ancient volcano overflow, become pulverized, forming a sort of cinder, a black and sandy soil, in which grow olive, orange, and citron-trees, pomegranates, and vines.

Nothing is so green, so pretty, or so charming as Aci-Reale, in the midst of a forest of orange and olive-trees. But now and again we come across a large black stretch, on which time has had no softening effect, where are fantastical forms, extraordinary shapes that look like animals with their twisted limbs intertwined.

We reached Catania, a large and fine city built entirely on lava, and from the windows of the Grand Hotel we could see the summit of Mount Etna. Before climbing it, I will write its history in a few words: The Ancients called it Vulcan's workshop. Pindar describes the eruption of 476, but Homer does not speak of Mount Etna as a volcano. It had compelled

the Sicanians to fly from it before the historical era. About 80 eruptions are known to us. The most violent were those of 396, 126, and 122 B. C., and next those of 1169, 1329, 1537, and especially that of 1669, in which a great many persons perished and the homes of more than 27,000 were destroyed. On that occasion two high mountains, called the Mounts Rossi, rose abruptly from the earth. In 1693 an eruption, accompanied by a terrible earthquake, destroyed about forty towns, burying under the ruins nearly 100,000 persons. In 1755 another eruption caused still more frightful ravages. Those of 1792, 1843, 1852, 1865, 1874, 1879, and 1882 were equally violent and disastrous. The lava was thrown up from the immense crater, or it burst through the sides of the mountain, making crevices that were sometimes 180 feet wide, through which it poured in a stream to the plains. On May 26, 1879, the lava that had been ejected from the crater in 1874, broke out from a new cone, which was originally 510 feet high, and raised it to a height of about 7350 feet. It ran rapidly down the road from Linguaglossa to Rondazzo, and came to a stop near the river of Alcantara. The area of this flood of lava was 22,860 hectares, notwithstanding that the eruption lasted only ten days. During that time the top of the crater emitted only dense vapors, sand, and ashes.

Thanks to the kindness of Mr. Ragusa, a member of the Alpine Club and proprietor of the Grand Hotel, we were enabled to make the ascent of the volcano with great facility: it is a rather fatiguing climb, but not by any means dangerous. A carriage drove us first to Nicolosi, through fields and gardens full of

trees grown in the pulverized lava. Now and then we crossed a stretch of land through which the road ran where the ground was completely black. After driving up gentle slopes for three hours, we reached the last village at the foot of Mount Etna, called Nicolosi, which is 2100 feet high, though only fourteen kilometers from Catania. We now left the carriage, and resumed our journey with guides, mules, rugs, woolen stockings, and gloves.

It was four o'clock in the afternoon, and the fiery sun of Oriental countries poured down on this strange land, heating and burning it. The animals walked slowly, with weary footsteps, in the midst of clouds of dust that rose above them. The last mule of all, which carried the bundles and provisions, stopped every few minutes, with the look of one discouraged at the thought of making, once more, this useless and painful trip.

All about us now were vines that had been planted in lava; some were young, others quite old. And now we reached a moor of lava covered with blossoming furze, a field of gold. We then crossed the enormous *conlée* of 1882, and were startled at the sight of the immense river so black and motionless, a bubbling and petrified stream, which poured down from the very top of the smoking crater, fully twenty kilometers away. It had passed valleys, rounded peaks, and crossed plains, this river, and here it was now before us, checked in its progress as its source of fire had become exhausted.

We continued to climb, leaving on our right the Mounts Rossi, and were constantly discovering new mountains, called by the guides the sons of Mount

Etna, which have grown up near the monster, who carries about him this necklace of volcanoes. There are about three hundred and fifty of these black offspring of this giant parent, and many of them are as high as Vesuvius.

We now crossed a sparsely wooded copse, also grown in lava, and suddenly the wind rose. It was at first a sharp and violent gust, followed by a moment of calm, then a furious hurricane, which raised a huge cloud of dust. We stopped behind a wall of lava to let it pass, and we had to remain there until night, when we were obliged to go on, though there was no abating of the storm.

By degrees the cold overtook us, the penetrating cold of the mountains, which congeals the blood and paralyzes one's limbs. It seemed hidden in ambush in the wind as it were; it stung the eyes and nipped the skin with its icy breath. We went along, wrapped in our blankets, looking like Arabs, wearing gloves and hoods, allowing our mules to walk unguided as they followed one another, stumbling now and then in the rough and dark path.

We finally reached La Casa del Bosco, a kind of hut inhabited by five or six woodcutters. The guide declared it was impossible to go further in this windstorm, and we begged to be allowed to stop here over night. The men got up, lighted a fire, and gave us two thin straw mattresses, which appeared to contain nothing but fleas. The shed trembled under the blasts of the hurricane, and the wind blew furiously through the loose tiles of the roof.

We found we should not be able to see the rising of the sun from the summit, but after a few hours of

rest without sleep we proceeded. Daylight had come, and the wind had died out. All about us now was a land full of valleys, the soil of which was black. It climbed gently toward the region of snow which glittered at the foot of the last cone, 900 feet high.

Although the sun rose in a very blue sky, the bitter cold of the high summits numbed our fingers and made the skin smart. Our mules, one behind the other, followed slowly in the winding path, which passed around the fantastic lava. We were now on the first snow level. This we avoided by a turn in the road. But another followed it very soon, which we had to cross in a straight line. The mules hesitated, tested the ground with their hoofs, advancing carefully. Suddenly, I felt as if I were sinking into the earth. The two front legs of my mount broke through the crust on which he was treading, and he fell in up to his breast. The poor beast struggled affrighted, rising only to fall back, when all four feet broke through the ice. All the other mules were in the same predicament and we jumped down to quiet them and to help them along. Every few minutes they fell, plunging in this white and cold mass, where our feet also sank at times up to our knees. Between these snow passes, which filled up the valleys, we found again great fields of lava, looking like stretches of black velvet, glittering in the sun with the same brilliancy as the snow. It was the deserted region, the dead region, which seemed in mourning, either all white or all black, blinding and horrible, though superb,—a sight never to be forgotten.

After four hours of exertion and difficult walking, we reached the Casa Inglese, a small stone house,

which was surrounded with ice and was almost buried in the snow at the foot of the last cone, which rises to a great height and is perfectly straight and crowned with smoke. Usually the night is spent here, on a bed of straw, before anyone can go to see the sun rise from the edge of the crater. We left our mules and began to creep up this dreadful wall of hardened ashes, which gave way under foot, for there was nothing to take hold of, and we fell back one step out of three. We went on, breathing heavily, panting, and driving the iron-shod staffs into the deep soil, and still we were compelled to stop every few minutes. We had to plant the sticks between our legs, so as not to slide back, for the descent was so steep that we could not even sit down to rest.

It took us about an hour to climb those nine hundred feet. For some time sulphurous and suffocating vapors had been floating about. We had noticed to the right, and again to the left, huge jets of steam bursting from crevices in the soil, and our hands had felt the burning heat of large stones. At last we reached a narrow platform. Before us a dense cloud rose slowly, like a white curtain coming up from the earth. We advanced a few steps, with covered nostrils and mouth, so as not to be suffocated by the fumes of sulphur, and suddenly at our feet opened an enormous and fearful abyss, about three miles in circumference. We could hardly make out, through the stifling vapor, the other side of this huge hole, which was 4500 feet wide, and whose straight wall plunged down to the mysterious and terrible land of fire. The beast was quiet — it slept at the bottom of the

pit, at the very bottom of it. The smoke alone escaped from the stupendous chimney, which was 9936 feet high.

It was still more wonderful all about us. Sicily was hidden under mists that ended at the coast, concealing only the land, so that we seemed to be in the heavens as it were, above the sea, above the clouds, so very high that the Mediterranean spread out on all sides as far as the eye could reach, looking like part of the sky itself. We were enveloped in the azure, we stood on an extraordinary mountain, that had come out of the clouds and was bathed in the sky, stretched above our heads, about our feet, everywhere.

But by degrees the shadows over the islands rose about us, inclosing very soon the immense volcano in a circle of vapors, an abyss of clouds. It was now our turn to be in the bottom of an entirely white crater, from which as we looked up we could see only the blue sky. On other days the spectacle is entirely different, I was told.

We awaited the rising of the sun, which appeared from behind the hills of Calabria. They threw out their shadow in the distance over the sea, as far as the foot of Mount Etna, whose dark silhouette covered Sicily with its immense triangle, disappearing as the sun ascended in the sky. We then had before us a panorama 250 miles in diameter and 800 in circumference, with Italy at the north and the Lipari Islands also, whose two volcanoes looked as if they were saluting their sire; while toward the south, barely visible, we saw Malta. In the harbors of Sicily the ships had the appearance of insects on the sea.

Alexandre Dumas, the elder, has given an excellent and very enthusiastic description of this spectacle.

We retraced our way now, sliding as much on our backs as on our feet down the steep hill of the crater, and soon entered the dense belt of clouds that enveloped the summit of the mount. After an hour's walk through the mists, which we finally cleared, we discovered beneath our feet the green and pretty island with its gulfs, its capes, its towns, and the big blue sea that surrounds it.

After returning to Catania, we left next day for Syracuse. An excursion in Sicily should always end in this strange and charming little town. It was as illustrious, at one time, as any of the larger towns; its tyrants rendered their reigns as celebrated as that of Nero; it produces a wine poets have rendered famous, it has, at the head of the bay it overlooks, a very small river, the Anapo, where grows the papyrus, the secret guardian of thoughts, and it has also within its walls one of the most beautiful Venuses in the world. Some persons cross continents on a pilgrimage to a miraculous statue—as for me, I came here to worship at the shrine of the Venus of Syracuse. In a traveler's sketch-book I had seen a picture of this sublime woman in marble; and I became enamored of her, as one becomes enamored of a real woman. It was she, probably, who induced me to take this trip; I dreamed of her, I spoke of her incessantly, long before seeing her.

But we were too late to enter the museum, which was intrusted to the care of a learned professor, Francesco Severio Cavalari, who, modern Empedocles that he is, descended into the crater of Mount Etna

to drink a cup of coffee. He took me through the town, which is built on an island and is separated from the land by three walls, between which pass three arms of the sea.

Then we went to the Latomias, immense roofless excavations, which were originally stone-quarries, but had become prisons, where, for eight months after the defeat of Nicias, the captured Athenians were confined, tortured by hunger and the horrible heat of these caldrons swarming with vermin, where they lay in agony. In one of these, the Latomia of Paradise, we noticed, deep in a grotto, a peculiar opening, called the ear of Dionysius, who it was said came to listen at the hole, to hear the moanings of his victims. Other versions also are given of it. Certain ingenious learned men assert that this grotto, when put in communication with the theater, was used as a subterranean hall for performances, to which it lent an echo that was wonderfully sonorous; for the slightest noise is carried with an extraordinary resonance. The most remarkable of the Latomias is assuredly that of the Capuchins, a vast and deep garden divided by vaults, arches, and enormous rocks, and inclosed in white cliffs.

A little farther on we visited the Catacombs, whose area covers 500 acres and here Mr. Cavalari discovered one of the most beautiful Christian sarcophagi known to art.

We then returned to the modest hotel, which overlooks the sea, and we sat up late, dreamily watching the red and green lights of the ships in the harbor.

Next morning, as our coming had been heralded, the doors of the delightful little palace that contains

the art collections and masterpieces of the town were opened to us. On entering the museum, I saw her (the Venus) at the end of a hall, and she was as beautiful as I had imagined her to be. She had no head, and one arm was missing; but never has the human form appeared to me more admirable or more enticing. It was not a poetical woman, nor an idealized woman, neither was it a divine or majestic woman, like the Venus of Milo, but it was a real woman, a woman such as we love, such as we desire, a woman we long to clasp in our arms. She had a large frame, well-developed breasts, powerful hips, and rather heavy limbs; she was a carnal Venus. One arm covered her breasts, and with the remaining hand she held a drapery before her, with a most charming gesture. The whole attitude of the body was conceived and executed to show the grace of this movement, the lines all seemed to concentrate here. This simple and natural gesture, full of modesty, and of lust also, which hid and revealed at the same time, attracting and concealing, seems to define, in truth, the attitude of all women on earth. And the marble was full of life. One would like to touch it, convinced that it would give under a pressure, like living flesh. The hips, especially, were inexpressibly beautiful. The undulating line of the feminine back, which curves from the neck to the heels, unfolded itself with great charm, showing in the contour of the shoulders, in the decreasing roundness of the limbs, in the slight curve of the instep, all the modulations of human grace.

A work of art is superior only when it expresses at one and the same time a symbol and the exact

reproduction of a reality. The Venus of Syracuse is a woman, and it is also a symbol of the flesh. Before the head of the Joconda, one is beset by I know not what enervating and mystical temptation of love. There are also living women whose eyes give us that dream of unrealized and mysterious tender affection. We expect to find in them, beyond the outward appearance, that ideal of which they seem to be the expression. But we pursue this ideal without ever attaining it, now in a wonder of beauty which seems to harbor certain feelings, again in the depth of glances that are only certain shades of blue, in the charm of smiles that come from the curve of the lips and a flash of ivory, or in the grace of an attitude born of chance and the harmony of the lines of the figure.

In this way have poets forever been tormented by the thirst of mystical love. The natural exaltation of a poetical mind, exasperated by artistic excitement, compels those favored beings to conceive a kind of cloudy love, desperately tender, never satisfied, sensual without being carnal, so very fragile that a breath will cause it to vanish, so unrealizable and superhuman is it. And these poets are, perhaps, the only men that never have really loved a woman, a real woman of flesh and blood, with her womanly qualities and defects, her limited and charming mind, her feminine nerves, and her disquieting femininity.

All creatures before whom their dream is magnified are the symbols of a mysterious but enchanted being, the being sung by them. This living adored one is somewhat like a painted statue, the image of a god before whom people bend the knee. Where is

that God? Who is that God? What part of the heavens is inhabited by this Unknown, which they have all worshiped, these fools, from the first dreamer to the last? No sooner do they touch a hand that responds to their pressure, than their soul takes flight in the invisible dream, far from the carnal reality. The woman they clasp is transformed, perfected, or disfigured by their artistic poetry. It is not her lips they really kiss, but the lips they dreamed of. It is not in the depths of her blue or black eyes that their feverish glances sink, but in those of some unknown or unreal being! The eye of their mistress is only the glass through which they try to see the paradise of an ideal love.

But if some passionate women can give our souls that rare delusion, others excite in us only the impetuous love from which the race is perpetuated. The Venus of Syracuse is the personification of this powerful beauty, wholesome and simple. This admirable torso, in Parian marble, is, we are told, the Venus Callipygus, described by Athenæus and Lampridedius, which was given by Heliogabalus to the people of Syracuse. It has no head! What of that? Its symbol is only the more complete. It is the body of a woman that expresses all the real poetry of a caress. Schopenhauer has said that nature, wishing to perpetuate the species, has made a snare of reproduction. This marble figure, seen in Syracuse, is truly the human snare divined by the ancient artist, the woman who conceals and reveals the disquieting mystery of life. Is this a snare? Very well, then! It attracts the lips, the touch of the hand, giving to kisses the perceptible reality of white and buoyant

flesh, so firm and rounded, delightful to clasp. It is divine, not because it renders an idea, but because it is beautiful.

And one thinks, also, on beholding her, of the bronze ram of Syracuse, the most beautiful piece of statuary in the museum of Palermo, which seems to be the embodiment of the whole world's animality. The powerful beast is lying down, the body rests on the legs, the head is slightly turned to the left. And this animal's head is like that of a god, a bestial god, wicked and superb. The forehead is broad and high, the eyes are set wide apart, the nose is long and thick and has a most brutish expression. The horns, which are thrown back, fall, rounded and curved, with their sharp points parted under the thin ears, which also somewhat resemble horns. And the animal's glance impresses you with its stupid, uneasy, and hard look. On reaching this bronze we feel as in the presence of a wild animal.

Who could have been the two wonderful artists that have expressed, under two such different aspects, the simple beauty of a being? These two are the only statues I have ever felt a passionate desire to see again, a feeling akin to that I have experienced toward certain human beings.

On leaving the museum, I gave one more loving look toward the marble figures, a look such as we give the beloved one at parting, and I immediately embarked to go and pay my respects to the papyrus of the river Anapo, as a dutiful writer should.

We crossed the gulf from one side to the other, and on the flat and bare shore we saw the mouth of a very small river, where the boat entered.

The current was strong and hard to pull against. Sometimes the men had to row, again they used a pole to glide over the water which ran rapidly between banks covered with small bright yellow flowers —two banks of gold. Here were reeds, which rustled as we touched them, which bent and rose, and there, with their roots in water, were deep blue irises, on which fluttered innumerable dragon-flies with glassy wings, pearl-like and quivering. Some of these flies were almost as large as humming-birds. Again on both the slopes that imprisoned us grew giant thistles and bind-weeds, weaving together the plants of the land and the reeds of the stream. Beneath us, deep in the water, was a forest of tall, waving grasses, which moved and floated as if they were swimming in the current that tossed them about. Then the river Anapo became separated from the ancient Cyane, its tributary, and we were still moving on between the two banks, with the help of a pole. The stream wound in and out, giving delightful views, perspectives which were both blossoming and charming. An island appeared finally, covered with strange bushes. The frail and triangular stems, eight or nine feet high, bore at the top round clusters of green threads, soft and flexible, like human hair. They resembled heads that had become plants, which might have been thrown into this sacred stream by one of the pagan deities who lived here in days gone by. And this was the ancient papyrus. The peasants, however, call this reed *parucca*. Farther on, a whole forest of these quivered and rustled, bending and entangling their hairy heads, looking as if they were conversing about unknown and mysterious things.

Is it not strange that this wonderful plant, which brought to our minds the thoughts of the dead, which was the guardian of human genius, should have on its ancient body an enormous mane of thick and flowing hair, such as poets affect?

We returned to Syracuse as the sun went down; and we saw in the harbor a steamer, just arrived, which was to carry us away that night toward Africa.

# V.

## From Algiers to Tunis

On the wharves of Algiers, in the streets of the village of natives, on the plains of the Tell, on the mountains of the Sahel, on the sands of the Sahara, are men clothed in robes resembling those of monks. Cowled in a turban, which floats behind them, with stern features and steady glance, these men look as if they belonged to some austere religious order, spread over half the globe. Their very walk is that of priests; their gestures, those of men who preach; their attitude, that of mystics full of contempt for the outer world. We are, in truth, with men overpowered by the religious idea, which effaces all else, regulates their actions, decides their conscience, forms their hearts, governs their thoughts, is above all earthly interests, all preoccupation, all excitement. Religion is the great inspirer of their actions, of their souls, of their qualities, and their faults. It is for religion's sake that they are good, brave, tender-hearted, and faithful, for they seem to be

nothing in themselves, to possess qualities which are only inspired or commended by their faith. We seldom discern the spontaneous or primitive nature of the Arab without finding that it has been, so to say, created anew by his beliefs, by the Koran, by the teachings of Mahomet. No other religion ever has become incarnate in any beings in such a manner.

Let us go and witness them praying in their white mosque, which we can see in the distance, at the end of the wharf of Algiers.

In the first courtyard, under an arcade of small green, blue, or red columns, men, seated or lying down, were conversing in low tones with the tranquil gravity of Orientals. Facing the entrance at the back of a small square room, which looked like a chapel, the cadi, a Turkish judge, administered justice. Plaintiffs awaited their turn, a kneeling Arab spoke, while the magistrate sat enveloped, almost hidden, in the numerous folds of his garments and the massiveness of his turban, with only part of the face showing, looking at the plaintiff with a stern and calm glance and listening to him. A wall, in which was a small grated window, divided this apartment from that where the women, who are considered much less important than men, and consequently cannot face the cadi, are awaiting their turn to make complaints through the little wicket.

The sun, which fell in showers of fire on the snow-white walls of these small buildings, similar to tombs of marabouts, and on the courtyard, where an old woman was throwing dead fish to an army of black and yellow cats, was reflected in the interior on the burnous, the lean brown limbs and the im-

passive faces. Farther on was the school, by the side of a fountain, where the water flowed beneath a tree. Everything was here within these calm and peaceful walls—religion, justice, and learning.

I entered the mosque, after taking off my shoes, and I stepped over the rugs in the midst of bright columns whose regular lines filled this quiet temple, which was deep and low. These columns were very wide, with one side facing toward Mecca, so that each believer, standing in front of it, sees nothing, is not in any way distracted, and with eyes turned toward the Holy City becomes absorbed in prayer. Some were kneeling, others were standing, whispering the formulas of the Koran in the prescribed attitudes; others again, having performed their religious duties, conversed together, sitting on the ground along the walls; for the mosque is not only a place of prayer, it is also a place of rest, where they tarry, sometimes remaining for days at a time.

Everything is very plain, bare, and white. All is peaceful and quiet in these houses of faith, so different from most Christian churches which are so full of animation when crowded, with the noise of the services, the moving about of assistants, the pomp of ceremonies and the singing; and then, again, when they are empty how sad they become, how they oppress the heart, looking like a death-chamber, like a cold room of stone, where the Christ suffers once more.

Arabs were entering incessantly, the poor and the rich, the porter from the harbor, the ancient chief, and the man of noble birth, in the silky whiteness of his shining burnous. Each one, barefooted, performed

the same rites, prayed to the same God, with the same devout and simple faith, without pose or affectation. They remained standing at first, with head up, the hands opened as high as the shoulders, in an attitude of entreaty. Then the arms fell by the side, and the head was bent; they were before the sovereign of the world, in an attitude of resignation. The hands were joined across the breast, as if bound, they were captives to the will of the Master. Finally they kneeled several times very quickly, without a sound. After sitting on their heels with hands outstretched on their knees, they bent forward to the ground, which they touched with the forehead. This prayer, which is always the same, and begins with the recital of the first verses of the Koran, must be repeated five times a day by the faithful, who before entering have washed their face, hands, and feet.

One heard, through the silent temple, nothing but the murmur of the running water in the interior court, through which the light fell in the mosque. The shadow of the fig-tree that grew above the fountain where they made their ablutions threw a green reflection on the plaited mats at the door.

The Mussulman women may enter, as well as the men, but they seldom come. God is too far away, too high, altogether too imposing, for them. They would never dare tell Him their troubles, confide in Him, ask of Him the help, the consolation, the relief for their families, their husbands and children, which the heart of all women craves for. They must have an intercessor between Him, who is so great, and themselves, who are so humble. This intercessor is the dead Turkish priest. In the Catholic religion, the

faithful have the saints and the Virgin Mary, who are the natural advocates with God for timid souls. It is, then, at the tomb of their saint, in the small chapel where he is buried, that we shall find the Arabian woman in prayer. Let us go and see her.

The Zaouia Abd-er-Rahman-el-Tcalbi is the most original and interesting in Algiers. The name *zaouia* is given to a small mosque joined to a *koubba* (a marabout's tomb), containing also a school and a higher course of study for the educated Mussulmans. To reach the *zaouia* of Abd-er-Rahman we first had to cross the Arabian town. It was an extraordinary climb, through a labyrinth of lanes, tangled and winding between the windowless walls of Moorish houses. They almost met at the top, and the sky seen between the terraces seemed a blue design of irregular and odd shape. Sometimes a long passage, sinuous and arched, abrupt like a mountain path, appeared to lead straight to the azure, which we saw suddenly on turning a wall, at the top of the steps, the glorious blue of the bright sky.

All along these narrow corridors, at the foot of the houses, Arabs lay sleeping in their tattered garments; others filled the Moorish *cafés*, seated on circular benches, or on the ground, always with a stolid face, drinking out of very small china cups. In these narrow streets, which we had to climb, the sun coming down in unexpected places, in streaks or streams at every break in the paths that cross one another, threw on the walls strange designs, of a blinding glare. We saw, through the open doors, the interior courts from which came a little fresh air. And there was always a square well, inclosed by a colonnade

upholding galleries. A sound of soft and strange music was heard now and then coming from these houses, and women came out, sometimes two by two; they gave us, as they passed, between the folds of the veils which covered their faces, a gloomy and sad look, the look of prisoners.

They all wore a headdress made of a piece of cloth tightly bound about the head, their bodies were covered with the *haïk*, and their lower limbs were incased in the wide trousers of linen or calico, which were very narrow at the ankle, and gave them a peculiar walk, slow and awkward, full of hesitancy. We tried to make out their features under the veil, which clung closely and outlined the face. The two bluish curves of the eyebrows, lengthened by a dash of antimony, extended far over the temples.

Suddenly I heard voices calling me. I turned, and through an open door I perceived, on the walls, large and very improper paintings, such as are sometimes found in Pompeii. The loose morals that were depicted, the joyous, disorderly crowd, crudely daring even in the streets, showed the great difference between the European sense of decency and that of the Orientals. We must not forget that it is only a very few years since the performances of Caragoussa, a kind of obscene Punch and Judy, were forbidden. Children looked on with their big black eyes, some ignorant and others corrupt, laughing and applauding the improbable and vile exploits, which are impossible to narrate.

All through the upper part of this Arabian town, between the dry-goods shops, the groceries, and fruit-stands of the incorruptible Mozabites,—Mahometan

Puritans, who are contaminated by contact with other men, and who will have to be purified on returning to their own country,—are open houses where a traffic in human beings is carried on, where one is invited to enter in every known tongue. The Mozabite alone, seated in his little shop, with his wares carefully set out around him, appears to see nothing, to know, to understand nothing, that goes on about him. On his right the Spanish women warble plaintively like doves; on his left the Arabian women purr like kittens. He looks, seated between the impure and nude pictures painted on both those houses to attract customers, like a fakir, a seller of fruit, hypnotized.

I turned to the right by a small passage, which appeared to end at the sea, spreading out in the distance behind the point of Saint Eugene, and I perceived at the end of this tunnel, a few feet below me, a gem of a mosque, or rather a very small *zaouia,* a series of small buildings, and square, round, and pointed tombstones, ranged along a staircase winding from terrace to terrace. The entrance was concealed by a wall, which one would say was built of silvered snow, framed with bricks of green tiles, and perforated here and there with regular openings, through which we saw the harbor of Algiers.

I entered—beggars, old men, women, and children were seated on every step, asking alms in Arabic. On the right, in a small structure, also crowned with tiles, was the first vault where, through an open door, we saw the faithful seated before the tomb. Farther down was the rounded and glittering dome of the *koubba* of the marabout Abd-er-Rahman, next to the

tall square minaret from which the call to prayer is made.

Again, all along the descent, were other tombs less known than that of the famous Ahmed Bey of Constantine, who caused dogs to gnaw at the entrails of his French prisoners.

From the last terrace, at the entrance of the marabout, the view was delightful. Our Lady of Africa in the distance overlooked Saint Eugene, and the sea stretched out to the horizon, where it mingled with the sky. Nearer to the right, was the Arabian town, climbing from roof to roof, to the *zaouia*, and farther beyond it, displaying its little houses of chalk. All about me were tombs, a cyprus, a fig-tree, and Moorish ornaments framing and crowning the sacred walls.

After taking off my shoes, I entered the *koubba*. First of all, in a small room, a learned Mussulman, seated on his heels, was reading a manuscript, which he held on a level with his eyes. Books and parchments were spread about him on rugs. He did not even turn his head.

A little farther, I heard a rustling and whispering. As I drew nearer, the women, all sitting about the tomb, covered their faces quickly. They looked like enormous snowflakes wherein shone bright eyes. Among them, in all this foam of flannel, silk, wool, or linen, children slept, moved about, dressed in red, blue, or green garments; it was charming and very primitive. They were at home here in their saint's dwelling, which they had decorated. To their stunted minds, God was too far away, too great for their lowliness.

These women did not turn their faces toward Mecca, but to the marabout, and they put themselves under his care. This is typical of the confidence that women repose in men. It is now, and always will be, the men's salvation. Their womanly eyes, so sad and gentle, eyes underlined by two white bandages, cannot understand the spiritual side of things; they see only the human being. A man, when he lives, supports and defends them; so a man must be the only one who can speak to God after death. They sat about, close to the tomb, which they had decorated and trimmed. This looked very much like the bridal bed of a native of Brittany, covered as it was with costly fabrics, silks, flags, and gifts of all kinds. They whispered and talked in a low voice among themselves, and some related to the marabout their anxieties, their quarrels, and their troubles with their husbands. It was a gathering of friends gossiping around this relic.

The whole chapel was filled with their strange gifts: clocks of all sizes which kept time, ticking out the seconds and striking the hours; votive banners, hanging-lamps of every description in brass and crystal. There were so many of these that one could not see the roof. They swung side by side, in different sizes, as in a lamp-maker's shop. The walls were decorated with graceful tiles of charming designs, the principal colors being always red or green. The floor was covered with rugs, and the light came from the cupola through a group of three arched windows, one of these being above the other two.

This was not the stern looking and bare mosque where God is alone; it was a sitting-room for prayer,

decorated with the childish taste of uncivilized women. Very often lovers come here to see them, to make an appointment or to say a few words in secret. Europeans that can speak their language often become attached to these creatures, whose eyes alone they can see.

When the marabout's masculine contingent comes in its turn to perform its devotions, it does not pay the same exclusive attention to the saint occupying this place. After bowing profoundly to the tomb, the men turn toward Mecca and worship God—for there is no other divinity but God, as they repeat in all their prayers.

## VI.

### Tunis

Before reaching Tunis, the railroad passes through a beautiful country of wooded mountains. After climbing to a height of about twenty-three hundred feet, describing meanwhile innumerable curves, where it overlooks an immense and gorgeous landscape, it finally penetrates into Tunisia by the Kroumiria.

The scene is then a series of deserted hills and valleys, where Roman cities formerly stood. There are first the remains of Thegasta, where St. Augustine was born; his father was a decurion. Farther on is Thubursicum Numidarem, whose ruins cover a succession of green, rounded hills. Farther still is Madarus, where Apuleius was born, toward the end of the reign of the Trojan. I never could enumerate the dead cities near which we passed until we reached Tunis.

Suddenly, after many hours on the road, we perceived in the low plain, the tall arches of an aqueduct

cut away in some places and almost destroyed, which formerly extended from one mountain to the other. It was the aqueduct of Carthage, of which Flaubert speaks in his "Salâmmbo." We passed a beautiful village, then followed a dazzling lake, and discovered the walls of Tunis.

We finally entered the town. To judge it properly, one must climb a neighboring hill to view it. The Arabs compare Tunis to a burnous spread out, and this comparison is very apt. The city stretches over the plain, raised slightly by the undulations of the ground, which causes houses to project here and there, and also the domes of mosques and the belfries of minarets. It is difficult to believe that these are houses, so compact and even is this endless stretch of white. Around the town are three lakes, that glitter like plains of steel under the powerful Oriental sun. To the north, in the distance, the Sebkra-er-Bonan and to the west, the Sebkra-Seldjoum are seen above the city; to the south is Lake Bahira, or the Lake of Tunis; looking again toward the north, the sea appears, looking also like a lake in its frame of distant mountains.

All about this flat town are miry swamps, an accumulation of filth, an incredible belt of putrid drains; low and barren fields, where small winding streams of water shine like snakes. These are the sewers of Tunis which, under the blue sky, flow incessantly, tainting the atmosphere, dragging their slow and nauseous mire through a land impregnated with filth toward the lake, which they have filled completely in its entire length and breadth, for the sounding-line goes down fifty-four feet deep in the mud. A chan-

nel is made through this mire to allow the passage of small boats.

But on a bright sunny day, this city lying among all these lakes, in a land inclosed by mountains, the highest of which (Zagh-ouan) is nearly always seen topped with clouds in winter, is the most striking sight, without doubt, to be seen on the borders of the African continent. On coming down from the hill and entering the town, we find it has three distinct sections: the French, the Arab, and the Jewish quarters.

Tunis, is, in truth, neither a French nor an Arabian town, it is decidedly Jewish. This is one of the rare spots on the earth where the Jew seems at home, as if he were in his own country, where he is outwardly almost the master, where he shows a tranquil assurance, though quaking somewhat yet. It is very interesting to see him, to observe him, in this labyrinth of narrow lanes where circulates, moves, and swarms a population, which is the most garish, and contains the greatest medley of odd costumes, glittering and silken, of all those on this Oriental shore.

Where are we? Is this Arabian soil, or the dazzling capital of a harlequin? A very artistic harlequin he must be, a friend of painters, an inimitable colorist who has taken pleasure in dressing his people in an amazing and stunning manner. He must have passed through London, Paris, and St. Petersburg, this wonderful costumer, and returning here, full of contempt for the northern people, has dressed his subjects in these motley colors, but with a taste which never falters, and a fancy that knows no

limit. Not only has he given their garments every original and graceful shape possible, but he has used to color them all the shades that ever have been created, blended, or dreamed of, by the most fastidious painter of *aquarelles*.

To the Jews alone he allowed the loud tones, forbidding at the same time the too brutal clashing of these, adjusting the splendor of their costumes with a prudent daring. As for the Moors, his favorites, whether they are quiet merchants seated in their shops, active young men or corpulent citizens walking slowly through the narrow streets, he took pleasure in clothing them with such a variety of coloring that the eye is carried away on seeing them. Oh! for these, for his beloved Orientals, his Levantines, his mixed breed of Turks and Arabs, he has blended such delicate shades, so soft, so gentle, so dim and harmonious, that to walk among them is a constant delight to the eye.

There are burnouses of shimmering cashmere like streams of light; there are gorgeous rags, side by side with *gebbas* of silk, long tunics that fall to the knee and small jackets worn over the vest, with innumerable buttons all along the edges. And these *gebbas* and vests, these jackets and *haïks* are blended in such a manner that they show the most wonderful colorings. There are pink, azure, blue, lilac, Nile green, deep blue, leafy brown, salmon pink, orange, faded mauve, wine-color, and slate-gray. It is a filing past of pictures of fairyland, from the most faded tints to the loudest tones, these latter drowned in such a current of dim coloring that there is nothing harsh to be seen along the streets through which

filters the brilliant light of day, as they wind continually between the low, white houses.

Frequently these narrow passageways are almost entirely obstructed by enormous creatures, whose hips and shoulders seem about to touch both walls as they advance. On their heads is a pointed covering, often silvered or gilt, a sort of magician's bonnet, from behind which hangs a scarf. On their huge bodies, a mass of quivering flesh, they wear loose bodices of bright colors. Their misshapen hips are imprisoned in white trousers that cling to them. Their ankles, embedded in fat, inflate the stockings; when in gala dress, gaiters of cloth of gold or silver are worn. They walk along with mincing steps in half sandals which they drag after them, for the foot is only partly shod, the heel striking the ground at every step. These strange, bloated creatures are Jewesses, the beautiful Jewesses!

As soon as the marriageable age draws near, when rich men begin to court them, the daughters of Israel think of nothing but increasing their size; for the heavier a woman is the more she is sought after, and the greater chance has she of choosing a husband to her liking. At fourteen and fifteen, these girls have slender figures, and are marvels of beauty, of refinement, and charm. They have light complexions, somewhat pale and of a transparent delicacy; regular features, the features of an ancient and exhausted race, whose blood has never been renewed; dark eyes under smooth brows, over which falls a heavy mass of fluffy hair, and with the graceful way in which they run from door to door, they fill the Jewish quarter with one long dream of passionate young Salomés.

After a while they begin to think of a husband — then begins this extraordinary fattening of the body, which makes monsters of them. After eating every morning the little ball of aperient herbs that stimulate the appetite, they remain motionless for the whole day, eating thick pastes which swell them to an enormous size. The breasts become inflated, the waists distended, and the hips increase in proportion, while the outline of the wrists and ankles disappears under an accumulation of flesh. And amateurs flock to see them, to judge, compare, and admire them, as they would in a competition of fat cattle. This is what makes them beautiful, attractive, and charming, these enormous girls who are to be married.

Then we see them go by, these extraordinary beings, wearing a headdress in the shape of a sharp cone, called the *koufia*, from which hangs the *bechkir*, dressed in the flowing *camiza* in plain linen, or in brilliant silks, with trousers sometimes white, again richly embroidered, and with trailing slippers called *saba;* they are astonishing-looking creatures, whose faces are sometimes pretty, notwithstanding the fact that their forms resemble hippopotamuses.

They are to be found in their houses, which are always wide open, every Saturday, which is a holy day, set apart for gala dress and for receiving callers; they sit in white rooms, close by each other, like symbolical idols covered with silk and shining jewelry, goddesses of flesh and metal, with gold gaiters on the limbs, and on the head a crown of gold.

The wealth of Tunis is in their hands, or rather in that of their husbands, who are always smiling, full of welcome, and ready to offer their services. In a

very few years, no doubt, they will become European ladies, will adopt Parisian styles, and to be in the fashion, will fast to grow thinner. It will be their gain, but our loss, we spectators.

In the Arabian part of the town, the most interesting quarter is that of the Souks, in which are long streets arched or roofed with boards, where the sun glides in, its shafts of fire looking as if they were cutting pedestrians and merchants in two. These are the bazaars, winding and crossing one another, where sellers, standing or seated in the midst of their wares, in little covered shops, call loudly for buyers; others squat motionless among heaps of rags, of colored stuffs, leathers, bridles, harness, saddles embroidered in gold, and yellow and red beaded Turkish slippers.

Each section has its streets, and along the galleries divided by a thin partition the men of the same trades are grouped together, all working with the same movements. It is impossible to describe the animation, the coloring and liveliness of these markets, for one could never express in words the glare, the noise, and commotion.

One of the shops is of such a very peculiar character, that the memory of it remains like a dream. It is the perfume shop. In compartments so narrow that they remind one of the cells of bees, in a line from one end to the other, on both sides of a rather dark gallery, young men with fair complexions, most of them quite young, are clad in light garments and seated in the attitude of Buddhist idols; they remain rigidly still in a framework which is fastened on the shoulders; this framework, forming some mystical

design about the head, is filled with tapers. The higher ones are short, those about the shoulders are longer, and those over the arms are longer still. The decorations vary slightly in the different shops. The sellers, pale and motionless, look like wax figures, in this chapel of wax-tapers. About their knees or their feet, or again within reach of their hands, are all perfumes imaginable, some inclosed in small boxes, in tiny phials, or even little bags. An odor of incense and aromatic plants, very strong at times, penetrates the air from one end of the section to the other.

Some of these extracts are very expensive, some, even, are sold by the drop. To count these the man uses a small piece of cotton, which he takes from his ear and replaces there.

When night comes, the whole quarter where the shops are is closed with heavy doors at the entrance to each of the galleries, like a valuable treasure house inclosed within another.

When walking through the other streets, however, the newer streets that end at the marsh, a peculiar chant was heard, which was accompanied with rhythmical sounds, muffled like the roar of a distant cannon and interrupted now and then for a few minutes. On looking about we discovered on a level with the ground, a dozen or so of negroes, whose heads were covered with scarfs, handkerchiefs, turbans, or rags. They all sang some Arabian chorus, while in their hands were rammers with which they beat down the earth, keeping time. They were in a trench, the stones and mortar of which they rammed down for the foundations of a new house which was to be built in this oily, muddy soil.

At the edge of this gap an old negro, who was at the head of these pounders of stone, kept time, laughing meanwhile like a hyena; and the others were all laughing also, as they continued their peculiar song, striking with energy at each new verse. They looked up in a sly manner at the passers-by who stopped; and the people laughed also, the Arabs because they understood the meaning of the song, and others because it all sounded so comical; but no one seemed to enjoy it quite so much as the negroes themselves, for when the old man cried out:

"Now then, strike!" they all took up in chorus, striking hard three times, crying:

"Hit the dog of a Christian!"

The negro shouted, pretending to crush something: "Now then, strike!"

And all repeated: "Hit the dog of an infidel!"

And this is how the European section is being built in the new district of the city of Tunis!

This new district! When one thinks how it is entirely built on mud which has become solidified, built on an unnamable soil, composed of unclean matter rejected by the town, one wonders how it is that the whole population is not decimated by every possible malady, every fever, every epidemic. And on viewing the lake near by, where the same conditions exist, from which the odors at night are so overpowering that they make one ill, it is hard to understand how even the old town can manage to live under such circumstances.

On recalling to memory the fever-stricken wretches of certain villages of Sicily, Corsica, or Italy, that part of the deformed population that trembles and

shivers with ague, poisoned by clear streams and limpid ponds, one is sure that Tunis must be a hotbed of infectious diseases.

Well, it is not so! Tunis is a very salubrious town! The impure air one inhales is invigorating, the mildest and most soothing to overwrought nerves that I have ever breathed. After the Department des Landes, which is the most healthful in France, Tunis is the one place where there are fewer epidemics than in any other country.

This does not seem possible, but it is so. O modern physicians, grotesque oracles, professors of hygiene, who send your patients to inhale the invigorating air of the mountains or the pure air of the green fields, come and see these dunghills that surround Tunis, then look at this soil, which is neither sheltered nor cooled with the shade of a tree; remain for a year in this country, this low plain with its torrid heat in summer, its immense marshes from the winter rains, then enter the hospitals — and they are empty!

Look up the statistics and you will find that people die here oftener of old age than of any disease. Then you may ask yourselves whether it is not modern science which is poisoning us with its so-called progress; if the drains in our cellars, so close to our wines and water-cisterns, are not distilleries of death in our homes, hotbeds and propagators of more serious epidemics than the stream of mire flowing in the sunlight in Tunis: you will perhaps admit then, that the pure air of the mountains is less soothing, that the bacillus-infected heaps of dirt in cities, and the dampness of woods is to be dreaded as more

likely to engender fevers, than the putrefied moisture of marshes a hundred leagues from the smallest kind of forest. To tell the truth, the undeniable healthfulness of Tunis is astonishing, and can be attributed only to the purity of the water that we drink in that city; which goes to prove that the modern theory is correct as to the manner in which germs are propagated.

The waters of the Zagh'ouan, coming from a distance of eighty kilometers from Tunis, are imprisoned underground, and reach the houses without ever coming in contact with the outer air, and, consequently, cannot gather any contaminating germs.

The astonishment I experienced in regard to this undeniable salubrity made me curious to visit the hospitals of the town, and the Moorish physician who managed the most important one very kindly took me through it.

As soon as the wide door, which led to a vast Arabian courtyard, was thrown open, I perceived a long covered gallery, supported on columns, and my feelings were such that I almost forgot what had brought me here.

Around me on all four sides of the yard were narrow cells, grated like those of prisons and containing men who, rising on seeing us, clung to the iron bars; their faces were livid and ghastly. One of them, putting out his hand and shaking it at us, muttered something insulting. Then the others began jumping up and down in their respective cells, like animals in a menagerie, and all shouted loudly; while above them, in a higher gallery and looking down on them, was an old Arab with a long beard and wear-

ing a heavy turban; his neck was encircled with brass necklaces and his arms, covered with bracelets, as were his hands with rings, hung carelessly over the balustrade, as he smiled at the noise below. He was a lunatic, but being quiet was free; he fancied himself a king of kings, reigning over the maniacs below him.

I wished to see these fearful lunatics, so picturesque in their Oriental costumes; they seemed more interesting and less sad to behold than our European insane, probably because they are so different in every way.

I was allowed to enter the cell of the first inmate. Like most of his companions, the use of hasheesh (an intoxicating narcotic which produces hallucinations) was the cause of his insanity. He was very young, exceedingly pale, and looked at me with enormously large and staring eyes. What was he saying? He asked for a pipe to smoke, adding that his father was waiting for him. Now and then, he raised himself, displaying under his *gebba* and his burnous thin spider-like limbs; his keeper, a giant negro with white shining eyeballs, threw him back on his rug every time, by simply touching his shoulder, which pressure seemed to crush the poor fellow down.

His neighbor was also a sort of yellow grinning monster, a Spaniard from Ribera, who crouched and clung to the bars, begging for tobacco or some hasheesh, with a threatening look.

There were two in the next cell, one of them was another smoker of the deadly hemp, and greeted us with wild gestures; he was tall and of powerful

build, while his companion sat motionless on his heels, watching us with shining eyes, like those of a wild-cat. His was a rare beauty; his short, black, curly beard rendered his skin livid, and his nose was well shaped, his face long and very refined. He was a Mozabite, who became insane after finding his young son dead, for whom he had searched two days.

Then came an old man who laughed and cried out to us, as he jumped about like a monkey:

"Crazy, crazy, we are all crazy, I, you, the doctor, the keeper, the Bey, everyone is crazy!"

He said this in Arabic, but we could understand his meaning, so perfect was his mimicry, so irresistible the manner in which he pointed his finger at us. He indicated each one of us and laughed, so sure was he that we were all insane, repeating incessantly:

"Yes, yes, you, you, you, you are crazy!"

And truly one felt, deep in the soul, a breath of insanity, a sort of contagion and a terrifying feeling in the presence of this malignant lunatic.

When leaving, I could see above them all a patch of blue sky, and looking down on this dwelling of the damned, was the self-styled lord of all these demented beings, the Arab with the long beard. He smiled constantly, as calm and beautiful as one of the Magi. He leaned over, and in the sunlight shone the countless articles of brass, iron, and bronze, keys and rings, with which he proclaimed his imaginary sovereignty.

For fifteen years he had been here, this sage who walked about with slow steps, with such a calm majestic air that one involuntarily saluted him with respect. He answered, with the mien of a king, a few w

words signifying: "You are welcome, I am pleased to see you." Then he went on and did not look at us again. For fifteen years that man had never lain down. He slept seated on a step in the middle of the stone staircase of the hospital—he had never been known to stretch himself out.

What cared I now for the other invalids, so few in number, however, that one could count them in the large white halls, from the windows of which we could see the glittering town, whose mosques and domes of *koubbas* shone out above everything?

I left with a mingled feeling of pity and envy for these demented beings who continue to exist in this prison, as the result of the dream found one day at the bottom of the little pipe filled with a few yellow leaves.

The night of that same day, a French officer, having a special warrant, offered to let us see some houses of ill repute, a privilege seldom granted to strangers.

We had to be accompanied by a special guard from the police of the Bey, otherwise, no door, not even that of the lowest native brothel, would have even been opened for us.

The Arabian quarter of the town in Algiers is usually full of animation at night, but as soon as the day ends, Tunis becomes a dead town. The small narrow streets, winding and uneven, seem like the corridors of a deserted city, where a few gas-jets, here and there, have been forgotten.

We went very far through this white labyrinth and finally entered a Jewish house, where three women performed the *danse du ventre*. This dance

is very ugly, not even graceful, and is attractive only to curious sightseers. Three sisters, all very much dressed, were going through immodest contortions under the encouraging glance of their mother, an enormous ball of living fat, who wore a headdress of gilt paper and begged for the general fund of the household after each spasm of her daughters. From this room opened three doors, revealing low couches. A fourth room showed a woman, who seemed beautiful; she was lying down. They all fell on me as I peeped in at her, mother, dancers, two negro servants, and a man who was in hiding behind the curtain. It seemed she was the legitimate wife of this last-named person, and the daughter and sister-in-law of these abandoned women. They showed me her little daughter, three or four years of age, who was also attempting the *danse du ventre.*

I came away disgusted.

With every precaution, I was then allowed to enter the dwelling of some great Arabian courtesans. We had to wait at the end of the street, and were admitted only after a great deal of parleying and threatening — for if the natives knew that strangers entered their homes they would leave them, considering them disgraced and dishonored. I saw some fine girls, fairly good-looking, in wretched rooms filled with long mirrors.

And again we followed our guide, groping our way through never-to-be-forgotten dark lanes, lighting matches in order to see, stumbling into holes, striking the houses either with shoulder or hand, and hearing voices sometimes or sounds of music, the clamor of wild revels coming through the walls,

as if from a distance, fearful in their muffled mysteriousness.

We stopped beside a certain door and hid on both sides of it, while the officer struck with his fists, calling out at the same time an Arabian phrase, an order of some kind.

The weak voice of an old woman answered him through the boards; and we now distinguished the sounds of musical instruments amid the shrill singing of women from the depths of this room.

They would not open — the officer became angry and used the most violent language. At last the door half opened; the officer pushed it back and entered as if it were a conquered city, and, with an air of triumph, motioned us to follow him.

We did so, going down three steps into a low room, where three or four little children were asleep on rugs along the walls — they were little Arabs, the children of the household. Another old women, one of those hideous natives, who looked like a bundle of old clothes, from which emerged a witch-like head, inexpressibly ugly and tattooed, tried to stop our advance. But the door had been shut, and we entered another room where a few men obstructed the opening leading still further, and all were listening in a religious silence to the harsh sounds going on within. The officer entered first, motioning the *habitués* aside, and we finally reached a long narrow room, where a great many Arabs were seated on boards on both sides of the long white wall extending from one end of the room to the other.

There, on a large French bedstead, which was almost as wide as the room itself, a pyramid of Arabs

could be seen, and from the burnouses turbaned heads peeped out.

At the foot of the bed, and facing us, next to a small mahogany table containing glasses, bottles of beer, coffee cups, and small pewter spoons, four women were seated, singing an endless monotonous southern melody, which a few Jewish musicians accompanied on their instruments.

The women were sumptuously dressed, like princesses in a fairy-tale, and one of them, a girl about fifteen years of age, was so surprisingly beautiful that her loveliness lighted up this strange place, making it a sight never to be forgotten, so unexpected was it.

Her hair was held back under a scarf of gold which went from one side of the forehead to the other. Under this straight metallic band, her eyes appeared large, with a staring, unfeeling look. They were black, set well apart; her nose was beautifully shaped; her mouth was like that of a child as she opened it to sing, and it was the only feature in her face that had any life in it. She had no expression whatever, only a wonderful regularity of lines, primitive, but superb, so unexpected as to make the whole visage charming.

In every face we meet, it seems, we could easily wish to alter a feature here or a line there. But in the head of this young girl, we never would care to change anything, so perfect and typical was her face. The smooth forehead, the nose, the cheeks, so beautifully molded and coming to a point at the chin, were framed in a perfect oval of a somewhat brown skin; the only eyes, the only nose and mouth which

could possibly fit in, were there also, and the absolutely ideal beauty we might imagine was realized in this girl.

Next to her was another young girl, charming also, but not so beautiful, one of those milk-white faces with very fair skin. On either side of these stars two other women were seated; they were of a low type, with short necks and prominent cheek-bones, two nomad prostitutes, those wretched creatures left on the road by some tribe, where they are taken up some day by a troop of soldiers who bring them into town.

They sang, beating time on the *darbouka* with hands reddened by henbane (a substitute for opium), while the Jewish musicians played on small guitars, tambourines, and shrill flutes.

Everyone listened without saying a word, with never a laugh, and with solemn countenances.

Where were we? In the temple of some barbarous religion, or in a house of ill repute?

In a house of ill repute. Yes, indeed, and nothing in the world ever gave me so unexpected, vivid, and delightful a sensation, as when I entered this long, low room where these girls, adorned, one would say, as for a sacred festival, awaited the caprice of one of the solemn-looking men, who seem to be muttering words from the Koran, in the midst of their debauchery.

One of them was pointed out to me, as he sat with his tiny cup of coffee, with eyes raised as if in deep meditation. He it was who had retained the idol; and nearly all the others were invited guests. He offered them refreshments and music and the

sight of this beautiful girl, until the time when he would ask them to retire. And they will bow to him in a very respectful way as they file out. He was handsome, this man who showed such good taste, and also young and tall, with the diaphanous skin of the city Arab which showed still clearer, owing to a black beard, shining and silky, growing somewhat thin on the cheeks.

The music ceased, and we applauded. Everyone joined with us. As we were seated on stepladders, surrounded by a crowd of men, suddenly a long black hand touched me on the shoulder and a voice —one of those peculiar voices of natives trying to speak French—said:

"I am not from here, I am French, like you."

I looked around and I saw a giant in a burnous, one of the tallest, thinnest, and boniest of all the Arabs I ever have met.

"Where are you from, then?" I asked in surprise.

"From Algeria!"

"Ah, I am sure you must be a Kabyle?"

"Yes, sir."

And he laughed, delighted that I should have guessed his origin, and pointing to his comrade, added:

"So is he."

"Ah, truly."

This was between the acts, as it were.

The women, to whom no one spoke, stood perfectly still, as immovable as statues, and I began a conversation with my two neighbors from Algeria, with the help of the officer of the native police.

I learned that they were shepherds, proprietors near Bougie, and that they carried in the folds of their burnouses the flutes of their country, on which they played at night to amuse themselves. They evidently wished me to praise their talent, and they showed me two slender reeds cut by them near a river.

I asked that they be allowed to play, and everyone became silent at once, with perfect good-breeding.

Oh! the astonishing and delightful sensation that filled my being on hearing the first notes, so faint, so strange, the unknown and unexpected voices coming from the two little weeds grown in water! The strains were sweet, abrupt, and lively: sounds that flowed on, one after another, without ever catching up as it were, never mingling together, a melody forever dying out and beginning again, floating around us like the faint breath of the life of the leaves and the woods, the life of the streams and the wind, brought into this house of ill repute in this section of Tunis, by these two tall shepherds of the Kabyle mountains!

## VII.

### On the Road to Kairwan

We left Tunis by a beautiful road leading along a small hill, followed a lake for a short time, and then crossed a plain. The wide horizon, inclosed by mountains with misty summits, was quite bare, only spotted here and there with white villages, where, from a distance, we could see overlooking the indistinct mass of houses the tall, pointed minarets and the small domes of the *koubbas*.

Wherever we go in this fanatical land, we see these shining little domes of *koubbas*, whether in the fertile plains of Algeria or Tunisia, or as a beacon on the top of mountains; far back in forests of cedars or pines, on the edge of deep ravines, or in thickets of mastic or cork-trees; sometimes in the yellow desert with two date-trees leaning over them, one on the left and one on the right, throwing on the milk-white cupola the faint and delicate shade of their palms.

They contain, as a sacred seed, the bones of marabouts, which have impregnated the limitless soil

belonging to the Faith of Mahomet, and have caused to germinate from Tangiers to Timbuctoo, from Cairo to Mecca, from Tunis to Constantinople, and from Khartoum to Java, the most powerful, the most mysteriously domineering of all religions that have mastered the human conscience.

Small, round, solitary, and so white that they throw out a radiance, they certainly look like divine seeds thrown in handfuls throughout the universe, by that great sower of faith, Mahomet, brother of Aïssa and Moses.

For a long time we went along at the full speed of four horses driven abreast, through endless plains planted with vines or sown with cereals just beginning to sprout.

Then suddenly the beautiful road, built on bridges and embankments since the French occupation, came abruptly to an end. A small bridge had broken down during the last rains, because it was too weak to resist the torrent of water coming down from the mountain. We went down into a ravine with great difficulty, and the carriage finally ascending on the other side, we regained the highway, one of the principal arteries of Tunisia, as they say in official language. For a few kilometers we went at full speed once more, until we came across another small bridge, which had also given way under the pressure of the waters. Then, a little further on, it was the bridge instead that remained standing; it was evidently indestructible and looked like a small triumphal arch, while on both sides of it the road had been washed away, forming an abyss about this ruin, which itself looked quite new.

About noontime we perceived before us a peculiar building. It stood on the edge of the road, which had all but disappeared, and was an agglomeration of small houses joined together and barely reaching a man's height. They were sheltered under a continuous line of roofs, some of which were a little higher than the others, giving this strange village the appearance of a series of tombs. On these roofs some white dogs ran about, barking at us.

This hamlet is called Gorombalia; it was founded by an Andalusian Mahometan chief, Mahomet Gorombali, who was driven from Spain by Isabella the Catholic.

We took breakfast and then proceeded. All about, with the aid of a field-glass, we could see the ruins of Roman buildings. First of all, Vico Aureliano, then Siago, more important still, where there are Byzantine and Arabian structures. And now the beautiful road, the principal artery of Tunisia, became a disgraceful ditch, the waters having destroyed and undermined it everywhere. Now and then the bridges had fallen down, leaving nothing but a heap of stones in the ravines; again, they remained intact while the water overlooking them had made a path for itself on the slopes of embankments, forming trenches sometimes 150 feet wide.

And why this havoc, these ruins? A child, at first sight, could account for this state of things. All the culverts are altogether too narrow to begin with, and all are below the level of the waters as they pour down. Some, then, washed over by the torrents filled with loose, dragging branches, are overturned, while the whimsical stream, refusing to run along the

other channels, which are out of its course, goes back to the path of other times, in spite of engineers. This route from Tunis to Kairwan is dreadful to see. Far from being of any help to travelers and vehicles, it is almost impracticable, full of innumerable dangers. The old road was good, but it has been demolished and replaced by a series of quagmires, tumble-down archways, ruts, and holes. It needs to be all made over even before it is completed. After every rainfall the work is begun again, without anyone being willing to admit that this long line of crumbling bridges will have to be forever repaired.

The bridge of Enfidaville was twice rebuilt—it has just been carried away again. That of Oued-el-Hammam was destroyed four times. They are swimming bridges, diving bridges; only those built by the Arabs can resist the rainfalls.

We were often angry at the delays, for the carriages had to go down into deep and almost impassable ravines, where ten times in an hour we felt sure we must upset, but we finally ended by laughing at it all as being a good joke. To avoid these dangerous bridges, we had to go in a roundabout way, to the north, then again to the south, turn to the east, to come back to the west. The poor natives, by dint of using pickaxes and chopping with hatchets, made a way through brushwood, evergreens, *thuja, leutisk,* heather, and fir-trees, the old path having been destroyed.

Very soon after this the shrubs disappeared and we could see nothing but a stretch of undulating ground, with the earth crevassed by ravines, and, here and there, lay the shining bones of some carcass, or

a half-devoured carrion abandoned by the birds of prey or the dogs.

For fifteen months not a drop of rain had fallen on this land, and half the animals had died of hunger. Their skeletons were everywhere, infecting the air, and giving to these plains the look of a barren country, parched by the sun and laid waste by a plague. The dogs alone had fattened on this decaying flesh. We often saw two or three of them fighting over the same carcass. With rigid legs, they tore apart the long limbs of a camel or the short ones of a young ass; they dismembered the breast of a horse or picked at the stomach of a cow. Others, again, wandered around in search of dead flesh, with nose in the air, hair bristling, and muzzle pointed forward.

It is strange to think that this soil, which has been charred for two years by a pitiless sun, drowned for a month under a deluge of rain, will become toward March and April a boundless prairie with grass as high as a man's shoulder and innumerable flowers such as we seldom see in our gardens. Every year during the rainy season the whole of Tunisia goes through, within a few months of each other, the most frightful aridity and the most wonderful fertility. From being like a Sahara without a blade of grass, it becomes suddenly — almost in a few days and as if by magic — a Normandy riotously green, a land intoxicated with heat, throwing through the harvests such shoots, such seeds, that they come out of the earth and grow, yellowing and ripening with so great a rapidity as to be almost visible to the naked eye.

This land is cultivated in a peculiar manner by the Arabs. They occupy either the white villages,

seen here and there, or *gourbis*, huts made of branches, or brown tents, shaped like enormous mushrooms, hidden behind dried brushwood or forests of cactus. When the last harvest has been plentiful, they decide early to till the ground, but when the drought has caused them almost to starve, they wait for the first rains to risk their few seeds or to borrow from the government the seedlings, which are usually easy enough to secure. Then, sometimes, as soon as the heavy autumn showers have softened the earth, they go to the cadi who holds sway over the fertile territory, or to the new European landowner who often rents the land dearer but at least does not rob them, and who administers justice in their dealings and their debates,—a fair justice, not a venal one,—and they point out the land chosen by them, which they stake and lease for one season only, and which they till.

Then what an extraordinary sight greets the eye! As we leave the dry stony regions and get nearer to the fruitful sections, from afar we can see the peculiar silhouettes of camels harnessed to the plows. The tall, fantastic-looking beast drags with slow steps the mean-looking implement of wood, which the Arab, clothed in a simple shirt, pushes before him. Very soon these astonishing groups grow more numerous as we reach a choice section. They come and go, crossing one another, showing against the sky an extraordinary combination of camel, plow, and man, who seem welded together, like one solitary being, comical in their solemnity.

The camel is now and then replaced by cows, asses, and sometimes by women. We met one, coupled with a donkey, and she pulled as hard as

the beast, while the husband pushed and urged them both on.

The Arab's furrow is not like the deep, straight furrow of the European plowman, but a kind of festoon even with the ground, which winds capriciously around tufts of lote-trees. The lazy husbandman never stops, nor stoops to tear up an obnoxious weed in his way. He avoids it by a turn, showing great regard for it, inclosing it within the winding circuit of his tilling, as if it were some very precious, sacred plant. Consequently, their fields are full of weeds, some of them so small that a twist of the hand would pull them up. The sight of this mixed farming of weeds and cereals becomes so exasperating that one feels like taking a pick and going to work to clear this land, where through the wild lote-trees passes this fantastical triad of camel, plow, and Arab.

In this quiet indifference, this regard for the plant already grown in God's earth, the fatalist soul of the Oriental shows itself. If that weed grew there, then the Master willed it so, evidently. Why undo His work and destroy it? Is it not better to turn and avoid it? If it grows to the extent of covering the whole field, is there not land elsewhere? Why take so much trouble, why go to any effort, increase one's fatigue, no matter how slight it may be, or add to the necessary toil? Why, indeed?

With us, the laborer, who loves his land, who is more jealous of it than of his wife, would, pickax in hand, declare war on the hostile weed and would never rest until he had destroyed it, striking with the strength of a woodcutter at the tenacious roots, sunk deep in the ground.

Here, what do they care? Never do they remove any stone, they go around it. Certain fields could be cleared in an hour's time of the loose stones that make the sock of the plow go up and down incessantly. But they never will be removed. The stones were there—well, then, let them stay where they are. Is it not the will of God?

When the nomad families have sown the territory chosen by them, they go away, seeking pastures elsewhere for their herds, leaving but one family to watch the harvests.

We now reached an immense department of 140,000 hectares, called the Enfida, which belongs to the French. The buying of this large piece of land, which was sold by the General Kheired-Din, former minister to the Bey, was one of the principal factors in bringing about French rule in Tunisia.

The circumstances attending this sale were amusing and characteristic. When the French capitalists and the general had come to terms, they went to the cadi to have the act registered; but the Tunisian law contains a special provision which allows the next-door neighbor of a property sold, to claim a preference on equal terms.

With us, by equal terms, we should understand an equal sum in any money in currency; but the Oriental code, which always leaves a door open for disputes, claims that the price must be paid by the neighbor, in moneys identically the same: the same number of legal titles and of the same kind, of bank bills of the same denominations as well as of gold, silver, or brass pieces. Finally, so as to make this as complicated as possible, it authorizes the cadi to

allow the original buyer to add to the stipulated sum a handful of small coins of any denomination, even foreign coins, which makes it impossible for the neighbor to find a sum equivalent in kind to the first.

On account of the objections of a Jew, who was a neighbor of this tract of land, the Enfida, the Frenchmen asked the cadi to be allowed to add to the stipulated sum this handful of coins. But this was refused.

The Mussulman law is prolific in ways and means, however, and another scheme was thought of. This was to buy this enormous piece of land of 140,000 hectares, less a strip of about three feet all around. In this way, there was no contact with any neighboring land, and the Franco-African Company became, notwithstanding its enemies and the Bey's ministry, sole proprietor of the Enfida.

This company has had the land tilled, has planted vines and trees, established villages, and divided the land in regular sections of ten hectares each, so that the Arabs have every facility to choose and indicate their piece of ground without danger of any error.

It took two days to cross this Tunisian province before we finally reached the farthest end. For some time the road, which was a mere trail through tufts of jujube, had been steadily improving, and we hoped to reach before night Bou-Ficha, where we were to stop, and we felt very much cheered at the thought, when suddenly we beheld an army of workmen, of all nationalities, occupied in replacing the tolerably fair road by a French highway, that is, a series of dangerous passes, and we were compelled to walk the horses once more. They are extraordinary, these

workmen. The thick-lipped negro, with big, white eyes and dazzling teeth, digs next to the Arab with his delicate profile; the hairy Spaniard, the native of Morocco, the Moor, the Maltese, and also the French laborer work side by side, stranded here in this country, one knows not why or how; there are also Greeks, Turks, and all the different types from the east; and one naturally thinks of the degrees of morality, honesty, and friendliness of this motley horde.

About three o'clock we reached the largest caravansary I ever have seen. It is a whole town, or rather a village, inclosed within one wall, containing three immense courtyards, in which the men — the bakers, shoemakers, and other tradesmen — are placed in small huts, and under the arches are the animals. A few clean cells, with beds and rugs, are reserved for distinguished visitors.

On the wall of the terrace, two silvery white pigeons gazed at us, their little red eyes shining like rubies.

The horses having had some water, we continued our journey. The road now led a little nearer to the sea, whose blue line we could see on the horizon. At the end of a cape a city appeared, whose straight, glittering light appeared to run over the water to the setting sun. This was Hommamet, called Put-Put under the Roman rule. In the distance, on the plain before us, rose a circular ruin, which, through a mirage-like effect, appeared gigantic. It was another Roman tomb, only thirty feet high, called Kars-el-Menara.

Night was closing in. Above us the sky was still blue, but in front of us a dense purplish cloud spread

out, behind which the sun went down. At the base of these clouds a narrow rose-colored ribbon unfurled itself in a straight line, becoming more and more luminous every moment as the invisible orb descended toward it. Large birds flew slowly above our heads; they were buzzards, I think. The sensation at night in this wild moor, which extended for two days' travel yet, as far as Kairwan, filled the mind and the heart with wonderful thoughts and feelings. Such must be the appearance at twilight of the Russian steppes. We met three men, clad in their burnouses. From a distance they looked like negroes, they were so dark and shiny, but on closer view I recognized the Arab type. They were men from the Souf, a peculiar oasis hidden in the sand, between the *chotts* (the salt lakes) and Tongourt. Night at last fell all around us. The horses could only walk. Suddenly through the shadows appeared a white wall; it was the intendant's house at the northern end of the Enfida, the Bordj of Bou-Ficha, a kind of square fortress, protected by an iron gateway and walls without any openings against the attacks of the Arabs. We were expected, and Madame de Moreau, the wife of the intendant, had prepared an excellent dinner for us. We had traveled over eighty kilometers, notwithstanding the state of the bridges and roads.

DECEMBER 12.

We left at break of day. The sky at dawn was of a deep rose-color. How can I ever describe it! I might say it was almost a salmon pink, were it a little brighter. Truly we are at a loss for words to express the varied combinations of color tones. Our

glance, the glance of the present day, can perceive the endless scale of shades,—it can distinguish the blending of colors, the different degrees, the modifications they undergo under the influence of light and shadow at certain hours of the day. But to express these thousands of subtle colorings, we only have a few words, the plain words which our forefathers used to describe the wonderful colors that greeted their primitive eyes.

On looking at new weaves, for instance, how many inexpressible tones are there between the chief ones? To conjure them up we can only use comparisons, which are insufficient.

What I saw that morning in a few minutes I never could express properly, even with the help of verbs, nouns, and adjectives.

We drew still nearer to the sea, or rather to a pond that opened into the sea. With my field-glass I saw flamingoes in the water, and I left the carriage to creep through the brushwood, in order to get a closer view of them.

As I advanced, I could see them distinctly. Some were swimming and others stood about on their long legs. They looked like floating red and white spots, or enormous flowers, growing on a slender red stalk; hundreds were grouped together, either in the water or on the banks. One would think it a hedge of carmined lilies from which emerged, as from a corolla, the blood-stained heads of birds on a long, curved neck.

As I crept still closer, some of them felt my near presence and flew away. One rose at first, then all followed. It was like the flight of a garden, with

flower-baskets rising toward the sky, one after the other With my glass I watched for a long while those pink and white clouds going toward the sea, dragging behind them their slender, ruddy legs, like the boughs of a tree.

This large pond was used formerly as a place of refuge for the ships of natives of Aphrodisium, a band of pirates who found shelter here.

We saw in the distance the ruins of this town, where Belisarius halted on his march to Carthage. A triumphal arch stands there still, also the remains of a temple of Venus, and of a large fort.

On the territory of Enfida alone there are traces of seventeen Roman cities. Near the banks of the river is Hergla, which was the wealthy Aurea Cœlia of Antoninus; and if, instead of turning toward Kairwan, we continued our way in a straight line, we should see, after a three days' march, the amphitheater Ed-Djem, standing in an immense uncultivated plain; it was as large as the Coliseum in Rome, and could seat 80,000 spectators.

Around this gigantic building, which would be almost intact if Hamouda, the Bey of Tunis, had not fired upon it, to compel the Arabs who refused to pay taxes to leave it, there are remains everywhere of a large and luxurious city of vast cisterns, and also the ruin of a Corinthian capital, a single block of white marble of the purest type.

What is the history of this town, the Tusdrita of Pliny, Ptolemy's Thysdrus, whose name is transcribed once or twice by historians? What did it need to become famous since it was so powerful, so largely populated, and wealthy? Oh! very little—only a

Homer. Without him, what would Troy have been? who would know of Ithaca?

In this country we learn with our eyes what history is, and especially, what the Bible was. We understand that the patriarchs and all the legendary folk, so great in books and impressed so strongly on our minds, were, after all, poor men wandering through the primitive tribes, just as these Arabs, solemn and simple-minded and having the ancient customs and ideas as well as the costumes, wander to this day. But the patriarchs' lives and deeds were sung by poetical historians, and became immortal.

Once a day, at least, at the foot of an olive-tree or on the edge of a forest of cactus, we come across what might be taken to be the "Flight into Egypt"; and we smile when we think of gallant artists who had it that Mary was seated on the ass, when without doubt Joseph, her husband, must have ridden it, while she most likely walked by his side, with heavy footsteps, carrying on her back, in a burnous gray with dust, the Infant Child.

Another picture we meet very frequently at almost every well is Rebecca. She is usually dressed in a blue woolen robe, gracefully draped, and has silver anklets on her feet, and on her breast a necklace of the same metal, which is held by chains. Sometimes she hides her face, as we come near; again, if she is beautiful, she displays a fresh, brown countenance, and looks at us with big, black eyes. She is truly the woman of the Bible, the one of whom the Canticle says: "*Nigra sum sed formosa,*" the one who, holding the water-bottle on her head when walking over the stony road, shows the firm, bronzed flesh of her

limbs, as she steps slowly, balancing herself gracefully; she who tempted the angels tempts us also, — we who are not angels.

In Algeria and in the Algerian Sahara, all women dress in white, those of the city as well as those of the tribes. In Tunisia, on the contrary, women of the city are draped from head to foot in veils of black India muslin, giving them the look of apparitions as they go through the streets, which are so bright in the little southern towns. The women of the country are clothed in robes of deep blue, which are full and graceful in effect, giving them a biblical appearance.

We crossed a plain where the handiwork of man may be seen everywhere, for we were nearing the center of the Enfida called Enfidaville, after bearing the name of Dar-el-Bey.

In the distance we saw trees! What a surprise! They were quite tall, too, though planted only four years before, which goes to prove how astonishingly productive is this land when it is properly cultivated. Amid the trees we could see large buildings on which waved the French flag. This was the residence of the general manager, and the heart of the future city. A village had already been erected around these principal buildings, and a mart was open every Monday, when extensive business transactions were carried on. The Arabs came in large numbers from distant points.

It is very interesting to make a study of the management of this immense property, where the interests of the natives have been looked after as carefully as those of the Europeans. It is a model

agrarian government for those mixed countries, where customs are entirely different, calling for special foresight in making the laws.

After taking breakfast in this capital of the Enfida, we departed to visit a very peculiar village built on a rock, a distance of about five kilometers. We went through vineyards at first, then returned to the moor, to those long stretches of yellow soil, strewn here and there with only a few tufts of jujube-trees.

The subterranean water-courses are only eight or twelve, or sometimes fifteen feet below the surface in nearly all these plains, which, with a little labor, could become immense fields of olive-trees.

Only now and then could we see a few cactus woodlands, about the size of an ordinary orchard at home.

The following is the origin of these woodlands: There exists in Tunisia a very interesting custom called the "right to vivify the soil," which allows Arabs to take possession of any uncultivated lands and make them fruitful, if the proprietor is not there to oppose them. So that an Arab, perceiving a field which looks fertile, plants either olives or especially a species of cactus mistakenly called by him fig-trees of Barbary, securing, by doing this, half of every crop as long as the tree lives. The other half belongs to the landowner, who has only to watch the sale of the fruit to claim his share.

The invading Arab must care for the field, fertilize it, protect it from thieves, and defend it in every way as if it really belonged to him; and each year he puts up his fruit for sale, so that the proceeds may be divided equally. Very nearly always, however he

becomes the owner of the trees and pays to the real proprietor a kind of irregular rent in proportion to the value of each crop.

These woodlands of cactus are an extraordinary sight. The twisted trunks look like the bodies of dragons, the limbs of monsters whose scales are blown about and bristling with sharp points. On coming across them at night, by moonlight, one feels as if in a land of nightmares.

The foot of this steep rock, on which is the village of Tac-Rouna, is covered with these tall, diabolical-looking plants. We feel that this must be the forest of Dante; that these objects are about to move, to wave their large, round, thick leaves, with ends like long needles, and take hold of you, crushing and tearing you apart with their frightful claws. I know of nothing so terrorizing as this chaos of enormous stones and cacti, standing guard over that mountain.

Suddenly, in the midst of these ferocious-looking rocks and plants, we found a well, surrounded by women coming to draw water. The silver jewelry on their necks and ankles shone in the sun. On seeing us, they hid their brown faces in the folds of the blue robes with which they were draped, and with the arms raised as high as the forehead, they waited until we passed, peeping at us meanwhile.

The path was very steep, barely passable for mules. The cacti also climbed all along the road in the rocks. They seemed to be one of us, surrounding, inclosing, following, and even preceding us. Above, at the top of the hill, appeared the inevitable glittering dome of a *koubba*.

We finally reached the village: a mass of ruins and of crumbling walls, where it was hard to distinguish the inhabited hovels from those which were deserted. The walls still standing to the north and the west were so much undermined and so dangerous that we dared not venture among them: a blow would knock them over.

The view was superb from above. To the south, the east, and the west was the endless plain washed by the sea on almost all sides. To the north were barren, reddish mountains, dentated like a cock's comb. In the distance, the Djebel-Zaghonan towered over the whole country. These were the last mountains we were to see until we reached Kairwan.

This small village of Tac-Rouna was a kind of Arabian stronghold, well sheltered from any attack. Tac, is an abbreviation of Takesche, which signifies fortress. One of the principal functions of the inhabitants, for one cannot in this case say "occupations," consists in keeping in pits the seeds which the natives confide to their care after the harvest.

We returned at night to sleep at Enfidaville.

DECEMBER 13.

At first we went through the vineyards planted by the Franco-African Society, and reached endless plains where wandered, from side to side, that extraordinary combination consisting of a camel, a plow, and an Arab. Then the ground became arid, and with the help of a field-glass we beheld a wilderness of enormous stones standing upright in all directions further than the eye could see. On getting nearer we recognized these as dolmens. This was a burial-ground,

the proportions of which were inconceivable, for they covered forty hectares! Every tomb is made of four flat stones, three of which are standing, the fourth being placed on top, forming a roof. For many years all efforts made by the intendant of the Enfida to discover any kind of vault beneath these megalithic monuments remained useless. About eighteen months ago,—or perhaps two years,—M. Hamy, who is in charge of the Museum of Ethnology in Paris, succeeded, after many researches, in discovering the entrance to these subterranean tombs, which was hidden with wonderful skill under a bed of heavy stones. He found therein a few bones and earthen vases revealing Barbary sepulchers. M. Mangiavacchi, the manager of the Enfida, has also discovered, not far from there, the almost obliterated traces of a large Barbary city. What manner of town could this have been, which covered with its dead an extent of forty hectares?

With the Oriental, however, we are forever astonished at the space given up in this world to ancestors. The cemeteries are immense and impossible to number—we come across them everywhere. The tombs in the city of Cairo occupy more room than the houses. With us, on the contrary, land is expensive, and the bodies of the departed are of little importance. They are piled up in heaps one over another, in a small space away from the town, in a suburb between four walls. The marble slabs and the wooden crosses cover generations buried in the same spot for centuries. There is a dunghill for dead bodies at the very door of the cities. They are given just sufficient time to lose their identity, in the earth

already fattened by human bones, time to mix their decayed flesh with this cadaverous clay; then, as others are forever coming in, and as in the neighboring fields vegetables for the living are being cultivated, men dig with pickaxes into the soil that devours mankind, and tear out the bones, heads, and ribs of men, women, and children, forgotten and huddled together; these are thrown helter-skelter into a trench, and to the late dead whose names are still known, is offered the place stolen from those whom nobody remembers, who have returned to dust, because one must be economical in civilized communities.

On leaving this ancient and immense burial-ground, we perceived a white house. It was El-Menzel, the residence of the manager of the South Enfida, where our journey ended.

As we had sat talking for a long while after dinner, we thought it would be pleasant to go out a few minutes before retiring. A glorious moon lighted up the steppe, and gliding through the scales of gigantic cacti rising a few feet above us, gave them a supernatural look like a herd of infernal beasts, exploding suddenly and throwing into the air in every direction, the round slabs of their hideous bodies.

Having stopped to look at them, distant sounds, continuous and powerful, attracted our notice. There were innumerable voices shrill or deep, of all tones imaginable, whistlings, cries, and calls, the strange and terrifying clamor of a panic-stricken crowd, a countless unreal mob which must be coming to blows somewhere. Straining our ears in every direction, we finally discovered that the outcry came from the

south. Then some one exclaimed: "The noise must come from the birds of Lake Triton."

We were, in fact, to pass next day, by the side of this lake, called by the Arabs El-Kelbia (the dog). It has an area of 10,000 to 13,000 hectares, and has been called by certain modern geographers the ancient interior sea of Africa, which had been placed until now in the *chotts* (salt lakes) Fedjedz, R'Arsa, and Melr'ir.

The strange noises came, in truth, from a flock of squalling waterfowl, encamped on the banks of the lake, like an army of sundry tribes. This lake was about sixteen kilometers distant from us, but we could hear in the night the uproar caused by thousands of these birds of all breeds, all shapes, and plumage, from the flat-billed duck to the stork with the long beak.

There were hordes of flamingoes and cranes, colonies of wild ducks and gulls, companies of grebes, of plover, snipe, and sea-gulls. And on bright moonlight nights all these birds, cheered by the light, and being far from men, who have no habitations near this large watery kingdom, become excited, shrieking out, conversing no doubt in bird language, and filling the luminous sky with their shrill voices, to which the only answer given is that of the distant barking of the Arabian dogs and the yelping of jackals.

DECEMBER 14.

After crossing a few more plains, cultivated here and there by natives but having remained most of the time untilled, though they could easily have been made fruitful, we discovered on the left the long

sheet of water of Lake Triton. As we approached, it appeared to be covered with innumerable islands, some white and some black. These were colonies of swimming birds, floating about in compact groups. On the banks, gigantic cranes walked along in pairs or three by three, standing high on their long legs. Others were to be seen on the plains, between tufts of brushwood, above which rose their heads looking anxiously around.

This lake, whose depth is from eighteen to twenty-four feet, was completely dry this summer, after the fifteen months of drought which Tunisia had sustained, the longest within the memory of man. But, notwithstanding its large extent, it was filled again in the autumn, for here gather all the rainfalls that come from the middle mountains. The wonderful wealth of this country comes from this: that instead of being crossed by rivers very often dried up but the course of which is regular, forming canals for the rain-water as in Algeria, it is overrun by ravines where the slightest dam is sufficient to check the torrents. So, as the level is the same everywhere, all showers that fall on the distant hills spread over the entire plains, making them for a few days or a few hours an immense marsh, depositing at each inundation a layer of slime that fattens and fertilizes it, like an Egypt without a Nile.

We now found ourselves on a limitless moor where grew an intermittent herb, a small grayish-green plant, of which camels are very fond. We could see, as far as the sight carried, large herds of dromedaries feeding upon it. When we passed among them they looked at us with big shining eyes, and

made us feel as if this was the beginning of Time, as if we were living in the days when the hesitating Creator threw handfuls of various types upon earth, as if to judge of the value of his doubtful creations, the shapeless animals, which he has since destroyed little by little, allowing, however, a few primitive types to survive on this neglected continent of Africa, where he has evidently forgotten the giraffe, the ostrich, and the dromedary.

And what an amusing thing we saw here: a camel that had just given birth to a little one was going toward the next camping-place, followed by the little camel being pushed along by twigs in the hands of two young Arabs, whose heads did not reach the back of the small animal. He was already tall, standing on decidedly long legs carrying a very small body, which ended in a neck like a bird's. There was an astonished look in the comical face that had been gazing at the new things of this world for a quarter of an hour only: the light, the moon, and the great animal walking before him. He walked very well indeed, without any hesitancy on this uneven ground, and he got closer all the time to the udder, nature having made this little animal just tall enough to allow him to reach the maternal breast.

There were others a few days older, others again a few months old, and then also some very tall ones whose hair looked like brushwood; some of these camels were yellow, others a grayish white, and still others were black. The scenery became very strange, unlike anything I ever had seen. To the right and left, rows of stone rose from the earth, ranged like

soldiers all in the same order, pointed in the same direction toward Kairwan, which was still invisible. They looked as if they were on the march in battalions, these stones standing one behind another, with a distance of about a hundred feet between them. They covered in this manner several kilometers, and between them was the clayey sand. This upheaval is one of the strangest things in the world, and there is a legend attached to it.

When Sidi-Okba arrived with his riders in this sinister desert, where remains to-day all that is left of the sacred city, he struck camp in this solitude. His companions, astonished at seeing him choose this spot, advised him to go farther, but he answered: "We must remain here and found a city, for it is the will of God that we should do so."

They objected that there was no water to drink, and neither stones nor wood with which to build.

Sidi-Okba commanded silence by these words: "God will provide."

Next day he was told that a greyhound had found some water. They dug in that spot and at forty-eight feet below ground they discovered the spring that supplies the large well crowned with a cupola, where a camel turns all day long the windlass that draws up the water.

The day following this, some of the Arabs who had been sent to reconnoiter announced to Sidi-Okba that they had seen forests on the slope of neighboring mountains. And on the next day, riders who had left in the morning galloped back, shouting that they had met walking stones, an army of them, which without doubt were being sent by God

Kairwan, notwithstanding this miracle, is built entirely of bricks.

The plain now became a marsh of yellow mud, where the horses slipped; they pulled at the carriage without advancing a step, and fell exhausted, sinking in the mire up to their knees, the wheels buried to the hub. The sky was overcast and presently a fine rain fell, filling the horizon with mists. Sometimes the road appeared to be improving, as we climbed one of the seven undulations called the seven hills of Kairwan, and again it became a frightful sewer. Suddenly the carriage stopped; one of the back wheels had broken down.

We had to get out and walk. We were then in the rain with the wind beating down on us, and we raised with each step enormous lumps of clay that clung to our shoes, weighing us down until we were exhausted. Again we plunged into quagmires, out of breath and cursing the stormy south; but we continued our pilgrimage to the Sacred City, which surely must be credited to us in the other world if, by any chance, the God of the Prophet is the true God. For it is said that, to the faithful, seven pilgrimages to Kairwan equal one pilgrimage to Mecca.

After tramping in this exhausted way for a kilometer or so, we saw through the fog, in the distance before us, a slender, pointed tower, which was barely visible and whose summit was lost in a cloud. It was a vague and startling apparition, growing clearer by degrees and taking on a decided form. At last we saw that it was a large minaret standing against the sky, so that we could see nothing else, nothing

around or about it; neither the city nor the walls nor even the cupolas of the mosques. The rain continued to beat down on us, and we proceeded slowly toward the grayish beacon light standing erect before us like a phantom tower which might disappear before long and sink back within the mists from where it had emerged.

Then to the right appeared a monument covered with domes: it was the mosque called after Mahomet's barber; and finally the city could be distinguished, though it was still an indistinct and undetermined mass behind the curtain of rain. The minaret seemed less high now than it had a while ago, as if it had sunk back within the walls, after rising to the sky to guide us to the city.

Oh, this melancholy city lost in the desert, in this barren and desolate country! Through narrow, winding streets, the Arabs sheltered in the sellers' shops watched us as we went by; and when we met a woman, between these walls yellowed by the rain, she looked like death itself walking about.

Hospitality was offered us by the Tunisian governor of Kairwan, Si-Mahomet-el-Marabout, a general of the Bey, a noble and very pious Mussulman who had already performed the pilgrimage to Mecca three times. He conducted us with great politeness toward the rooms reserved for strangers, where we found large divans and wonderful Arabian rugs in which we wrapped ourselves to sleep. To honor us especially, one of his sons brought us with his own hands all the different things we needed.

We dined that night at the house of the French consul and civil comptroller, where we found a warm

and charming reception, which consoled and recompensed us for our previous hardships.

DECEMBER 15.

Daylight had not appeared yet when one of my companions awoke me. We had arranged to take a Turkish bath the first thing before visiting the town.

The streets were already filled, for Orientals rise before the sun, and we could see between the houses a fine sky full of promise of heat and light.

We followed lane after lane, we passed the well where the camel imprisoned in the cupola was turning around without ceasing, drawing water, and we finally entered a dark house with thick walls, in which we could see nothing at first and where the damp, hot atmosphere suffocated us on entering.

We saw some Arabs sleeping on rugs, and the proprietor of the baths, after making us undress, took us into the sweating-rooms, cell-like places, dark and vaulted, where daylight came in from the top by a narrow window; the floor was covered with a glue-like water, in which we could not walk without fearing to fall at every step.

After all the massage operations had been gone through and we had returned to the open air, we were intoxicated with pleasure, as we perceived in the bright sunlight the streets of Kaifwan, the Sacred City, which is like all Arabian towns, but indeed fiercer, more harshly characteristic, stamped with fanaticism, and more striking in its obvious poverty, its wretched yet haughty nobility, than any other city.

The inhabitants had just come through a period of drought, and it was easy to detect the look of famine

which seemed to pervade even the houses. They sold, as in all the market towns of central Africa, all sorts of little things in box-like shops, where the merchants were squatting after the Turkish fashion. There were dates from Gafso or the Souf, gathered in large bundles of clammy paste, from which the seller detached fragments with his fingers. There were also vegetables, pimentos, and dough, and in the *souks*, which were long, winding, covered bazaars, were fabrics, rugs, saddlery embroidered in gold and silver, and an incredible quantity of cobblers making Turkish slippers of yellow leather. Until the French occupation, the Jews had never succeeded in entering this impenetrable city. Now they swarmed and preyed upon it. They already possessed the jewelry of the women and the legal titles of property to most of the houses on which they had lent money; they soon became owners of these, thanks to the renewing system and the multiplication of debts, which they carry on with consummate skill and rapacity.

We went toward the mosque, Djama-Kebir or Sidi-Okba, whose tall minaret overlooked the city and the desert which cuts it off from the world. It appeared suddenly at the turn of the road. It is a large, massive building supported by enormous buttresses, a white mass stately in its inexplicably fierce beauty. On entering it, a magnificent courtyard appeared first, inclosed by a double cloister upheld by two graceful rows of Roman columns. We might have been in the interior of one of the beautiful monasteries of Italy.

The mosque itself was on the right, and it received the light from the court through seventeen

folding doors, all of which we caused to be opened before we entered.

I know of only three other religious structures in the world that have inspired in me the unexpected and startling emotion that I felt before this barbaric and astonishing monument: Mont Saint-Michel, Saint Mark's of Venice, and the Chapel Palatine in Palermo.

These are masterpieces conforming to reason, studied and admirable conceptions of great architects, who were confident of the effect to be produced; pious men, no doubt, but men who were artists before everything, inspired by the love of lines, of design, and decorative beauty, as much as, and perhaps more than, by love of God. Here was a very different matter. A fanatical wandering tribe, barely capable of erecting walls, had come upon this land covered with ruins left by its predecessors, and, gathering everything that seemed beautiful, had raised, compelled by a divine inspiration, a monument to its God, a building composed of materials torn from crumbling towns, but a structure as perfect and stately as the purest conceptions of the greatest hewers of stone.

Before us appeared a huge temple that looked like a sacred forest, for one hundred and eighty columns in onyx, porphyry, and marble supported the arches of seventeen naves corresponding to the seventeen doors.

The glance was held for the moment and then carried away through this deep entanglement of slim, round pillars of an irreproachable grace, whose every shade blended and harmonized, and whose Byzantine

capitals of the African and Oriental school were of rare workmanship and infinite variety. Some certainly were perfect, and the most original, perhaps, represented a palm-tree twisted by the wind.

As we advanced in this divinely beautiful abode all the columns seemed to be moving, to be forming about us varied designs of a delightful, changeable regularity.

In our Gothic cathedrals the effect of vastness is obtained through the intended disproportion between the height and the width. Here, on the contrary, the sole harmony of this low temple consisted in the proportion and the number of these slender shafts upholding the edifice, filling, peopling, and making it what it was, creating its charm and grandeur. Their colored multitude gave an impression of limitless space, while the building, not being very high, conveyed to the mind a feeling of weightiness. It seemed as vast as the world, and one felt crushed, as under the power of a God.

The God who inspired this superb masterpiece of art is without doubt the One who dictated the Koran, not the God of the Gospels. His ingenious doctrine spreads more than it rises, astonishes by its propagation more than by its loftiness.

Everywhere we found remarkable details. The room of the Sultan, who entered by a special door, was built from a wooden wall carved as if by a master sculptor. The pulpit, also, in panels wonderfully chiseled, was of a very excellent design, and the *muhrab* which indicated the Mecca was a beautiful niche of sculptured marble, both painted and gilt, and exquisitely decorated.

Next to this *muhrab*, two neighboring columns left barely room between them for a human body to glide through. Those of the Arabs who can do so are cured of rheumatism, according to some, others again pretend they can obtain other more ideal favors.

Facing the middle door of the mosque the ninth to the right, as well as to the left, the minaret stood upright on the other side of the courtyard. It had a hundred and twenty-nine steps, which we climbed.

From that height, Kairwan at our feet seemed a checkerboard of plaster terraces, from which flashed the large, glittering cupolas of the mosques and *koubbas*. All about us was a yellow, limitless desert, while near the walls appeared here and there the green slabs of the field of cacti. This boundless horizon was infinitely void and sad, and was more depressing than the Sahara itself.

Kairwan, it seems, was a much larger city, and the names of the districts which have disappeared are still mentioned. These are Draa-el-Temmar, the hill of the date-sellers; Draa-el-Ouiba, the hill of the wheat-measurers; Draa-el-Kerronia, the hill of the gingerbread-sellers; Draa-el-Gatrania, the hill of the tar-sellers; Derb-es-Mesmar, the district of the nail-merchants.

Isolated where it stands outside the city about one kilometer away, the *zaouia*, or rather the mosque of Sidi-Sahab (the prophet's barber) attracts the eye from afar; we went toward it. We found this *zaouia* very different from that of Djama-Kebir, which we had just left; though not stately like the latter, this one was the most graceful, the most highly colored and coquettish of all the mosques, and was the most pe-

fect specimen of Arabian decorative art that I ever have seen.

We entered, by a staircase of antique tiles of a delightful design, into a small entrance hall, paved and ornamented in the same manner. A long, narrow courtyard came next, surrounded by a cloister with arches, in the shape of a horse-shoe, resting on Roman columns and reflecting, when the day is bright, the dazzling brilliancy of the sun, which pours down in sheets of gold on all these walls, covered evenly with tiles of wonderful coloring and infinite variety. The large square courtyard which followed was also entirely decorated in the same manner. The light shone, streaming and gilding with fire, this immense enameled palace, where were lighted up, under the blazing Saharan sky, all the designs and colorings of Oriental pottery. Above these were inexpressibly delightful arabesques. It was from this fairy-like courtyard that opened the door of the sanctuary containing the tomb of Sidi-Sahab, companion and barber to the prophet, three hairs of whose beard he carried on his breast to his dying day.

This sanctuary, decorated with regular designs in white and black marble, in which inscriptions are traced, which was filled with thick rugs and standards, appeared to me less beautiful than the two wonderful courts by which we reached it. On leaving it, we crossed a third court, peopled with young men. It was a Mussulman college, a school for fanatics. All these *zaouias,* of which the land of Islam is covered, are, as it were, the eggs of the innumerable orders and fraternities between which are divided the special devotions of the faithful.

The principal one in Kairwan (I am not speaking here of the mosques which belong to God alone) are: the *zaouia* of Si-Mahomet-Elonani, the *zaouia* of Sidi-Abd-el-Kader-ea Djalani, the greatest and most revered saint of Islam; the *zaouia* Et-Tid-Jani; the *zaouia* Sidi-Mahomet-Ben-Aissa from Mekues, which contains tambourines, derboukas, swords, iron heads, and other instruments necessary to the fierce ceremonies of the Aissaouas.

These innumerable brotherhoods and fraternities of Islam, which resemble the Catholic orders in many points, and which, placed under the protection of a venerated marabout, are connected with the prophet by a chain of pious doctors called by the Arabs, "Selselat," have increased considerably since the beginning of the present century especially, and they form the most formidable bulwarks of the Mahometan religion against the civilization and domination of Europeans.

Under the title of "Marabout and Khouan," the commander-in-chief, General Rim, has enumerated and analyzed them in the most complete manner. I find in that book a few very curious texts on the doctrines and practices of these confederations. Each one insists that it has maintained intact the obedience to the five commandments of the Prophet, and has also received from him instructions showing the only way to reach a perfect union with God, which is the aim of all religious Mussulmans. Notwithstanding this pretense of an absolute orthodoxy and purity of creed, all these orders and fraternities have customs, teachings, and tendencies widely differing from one another. Some of these organize powerful religious

associations, which are directed by learned theologians leading an austere life, men truly superior, as well versed theoretically as they are formidable diplomatists in their relations with us; who govern with unusual skill their schools of sacred science, of higher philosophy, and also schools of warfare against Europeans. Others, again, form peculiar unions with fanatics or quacks who look like religious jugglers, and who are sometimes possessed of exaggerated enthusiasm; again mere mountebanks taking advantage of the stupidity and simple-mindedness of men.

As I have already said, the sole aim of all good Mussulmans is an intimate union with God. Various mystical processes lead to that perfect state, and each confederation has its own method of enthusiasm. In general, this method leads the adept to a state of complete subjection which makes him a blind and easy tool in the hands of the chief.

Each order has at its head a *sheik*, a master of the order. The rules say:

"You will be in the hands of your *sheik* like the corpse in the hands of the washer of dead bodies. Obey him in everything he says, for it is the voice of God himself who commands through him. Do not forget that you are his slave, and that you must not do anything without his consent.

"The *sheik* is the beloved of God; he is superior to all other human beings, and takes rank after the prophets. So that you must see only him and see him everywhere. Banish from your heart every other thought but that which has God or the *sheik* for object."

Next to this sacred personage are the Moquaddem, vicars to the *sheik*, propagators of the Faith.

Finally, those who are merely initiated to the order are called the *Khouan*, the brothers.

Each fraternity, in order to attain that state of hallucination where man is one with God, has its special prayers, or rather its particular stupefying gymnastics. This is called the *dirkr.* It is nearly always a very short invocation, or rather a repetition of a word or phrase for an infinite number of times. The adepts pronounce, with regular motions of the head and neck, two hundred, five hundred, or even a thousand times, either the word God or the formula which recurs in all their prayers: "There is no other God but God," adding also a few verses indicating the fraternity to which they belong.

The neophyte, at the moment of his initiation, is called *talamid,* then *faquir, Soufi, Salek,* and then *med-jedoub,* (the enraptured, the fanatic). It is at this moment that either inspiration or lunacy takes place, the spirit being separated from the body responds to a sort of mystical hysteria. This man thenceforth does not belong to physical life. Spiritual life alone exists for him, and he does not have to perform the practices of his religion.

Above this position, there is only that of *touhid,* which is the supreme beatitude, the complete loss of identity with God.

Ecstasy has also its degrees, which are curiously described by Sheik-Snoussi, affiliated to the order of the Khelonatya, who are seers, interpreting dreams. The wonderful similarity between these and the Christian Mystics is worthy of notice.

This is what Sheik-Snoussi writes:

". . . The adept enjoys thereafter the sight of other lights which are to him the most perfect talismans.

"The number of these lights is seventy thousand; this is subdivided into several series and composes the seven degrees by which we reach the perfect state of the soul. The first of these degrees is humaneness. We perceive ten thousand lights, which are perceptible only to those who can reach this degree: their color is dull — they blend one into the other. To attain the second degree, the heart must have been purified. Then we discover ten thousand other lights belonging to this degree, which is that of passionate ecstasy; their color is light blue. We reach the third degree, the ecstasy of the heart. Then we see hell and its attributes, as well as ten thousand other lights, whose color is as red as that produced by a vivid fire. At this point we are enabled to see genii and their symbols, for the heart can enjoy seven spiritual conditions, accessible only to certain affiliated.

"Rising after this to another degree, we see ten thousand new lights, belonging to the state of ecstasy of the material soul. These lights are of a pronounced yellow. We can then see the souls of prophets and of saints.

"The fifth degree is that of the mysterious ecstasy. We behold the angels and ten thousand other lights of a dazzling white.

"The sixth is the ecstasy of evil spirits. We enjoy also ten thousand other lights, whose color is that of limpid mirrors. Having reached this point we feel a delightful rapture of the mind, called *el-Khadir*, which is the fundamental origin of spiritual life. Then only do we see the prophet Mahomet.

"Finally we reach the last ten thousand hidden lights attaining the seventh degree, which is beatitude. These lights are green and white, but they undergo successive transformations; for instance, they pass through the color of precious stones to take on a clearer light; then they finally acquire a shade which has no similarity, no resemblance whatever to any other shade, which is not in existence anywhere, but is spread all over the universe. Having reached this state, God's attributes are revealed to us. It is then as if we did not belong to this world. Terrestrial things have disappeared for us."

Are these not the seven visions of heaven of St. Theresa, and do not the seven colors correspond to the seven degrees of ecstasy? To attain this state of

agitation, here is the special process employed by the Khelonatya:

One man sits with legs crossed repeating for a certain length of time: "There is no God but Allah," putting the lips alternately to the right shoulder and then to the heart. Then one recites the invocation, which consists in setting forth the names of God, giving an idea of his greatness and power, mentioning only the ten following names, in the order in which they are given: "Him, the Just, the Living, the Irresistible, the Greatest Giver, the Greatest Provider, the One who opens to Truth the hardened hearts of men, the Only, the Eternal, the Immutable One."

The adepts, after each invocation, must recite certain prayers a hundred times, or even more, in succession. They form a circle to recite these special prayers. The one who says them aloud, when pronouncing *Him,* bends his head forward to the center of the ring, slanting it to the right, when he throws it back toward the left to the back of the circle. One of the others begins the word *Him,* after which the others all join in chorus, bending their heads first to the right, then to the left.

Let us compare these practices with those of the Quadrya. "Having seated themselves with legs crossed, they touch the tip of the right foot, then the principal artery, called *el-Kias,* which passes around the entrails; they then place the open hand, with outstretched fingers, on the knee, bend the head to the right, saying *ha,* to the left, saying *hou,* and again forward, saying *hi* then they begin once more. It is very important and altogether necessary that the one who pronounces the words, should stop on the first of these names as long as his breath will allow; then, when he has been purified, he emphasizes the

name of God in the same manner, and this as long as his soul may be liable to reproach; after which he pronounces the word *hou* when the body is willing to obey; and finally when the soul has attained the longed-for degree of perfection, he can say the word *hi*."

These prayers, which are to bring about the complete annihilation of a man's individuality, which absorb him into the essence of God (that is, the state in which one reaches the contemplation of God in His attributes) is called *ouerd-debered*.

But among all the Algerian fraternities, surely that of the Aissaoua attracts strangers more than any other. We know of the frightful practices of these hysterical mountebanks, who after working themselves up to a state of ecstasy, by forming a sort of magnetic chain and reciting certain prayers, can eat the thorny leaves of the cactus also nails, ground glass, scorpions, and snakes. Sometimes these madmen devour, with fearful convulsions, a living lamb, wool, skin, and bleeding flesh, leaving only a few bones on the ground. They thrust spearheads in their cheeks or bodies; and after death, if an autopsy is performed, all kinds of different objects are found in the lining of their stomachs.

We find in the text-books of the Aissaoua the most poetic prayers and teachings of all the Islamitic fraternities.

I will give only a few phrases taken from General Rim's book:

"The prophet said to Abou-Dirr-el R'ifari, one day: 'O Abou-Dirr, the laugh of the poor is a worship; their games, the proclamation and the praise of God; their sleep a charity.'

"The *sheik* again said:

"'To pray and fast in a solitude, and not to have any mercy in the heart, that is called hypocrisy.

"'Love is the highest degree of perfection. He who loves not has not reached any degree of perfection. There are four ways of loving, to love with the mind, to love with the heart, to love with the soul, and the mysterious love.'"

Who has ever described love in a more complete, more subtle, and more beautiful manner?

It would be easy to multiply these quotations indefinitely.

But next to these mystical orders belonging to the Great Mussulman orthodox rites, comes a dissenting sect, that of the Ibadites, or Beni Mozab, which presents very strange peculiarities.

The Beni-Mozab inhabit, south of the French possessions in Algeria, in the most arid part of the Sahara, a small country, the Mozab, which they have rendered fertile through stupendous efforts.

We find with astonishment, in this small republic of these Puritans of Islam, the principles of government of a socialist community and also the organization of the Scottish Presbyterian Church. Their philosophy is harsh, intolerant, inflexible. They have a horror of blood being spilt, and admit its possibility only in defense of the creed. Half of the ordinary actions of mankind, the accidental or voluntary contact with the hand of a woman, a damp object, or one which is soiled and forbidden, are grave faults requiring special and prolonged ablution.

Celibacy which leads to debauchery, anger, singing, music, gambling, dancing, all manner of luxuries,

tobacco and coffee taken in a public-house, are sins, which if persevered in, incur a much dreaded excommunication called the *tebria*.

Contrary to the doctrines of a Mussulman congregation, where a majority proclaim that the pious practices, the prayers, and the mystical enthusiasm are sufficient to save the faithful, no matter what their actions may be, the Ibadites maintain that the eternal salvation of man cannot be gained without his leading a pure life. They carry to excess the observance of the precepts of the Koran, treating the dervishes and fakirs as heretics, and not believing that God, who is a just and inflexible master, approves of the intervention of the Prophets and Saints, whose memory they venerate, however. They deny the inspired and enlightened ones, and do not even recognize the right of the Iman to forgive his fellowmen, for God alone can rightly judge of the importance of faults and the value of repentance.

The Ibadites, however, are schismatics who belong to the most ancient of the schisms of Islam, descendants of the Assassins of Ali, son-in-law of the Prophet.

But the orders which contain in Tunisia the greatest number of adherents, who seem to be on a line with the Aissaoua, are those of the Tid-janya and the Iadrya, this last founded by Abd-el-Kader-el-Djmani, the holiest man in the Islam faith, according to Mahomet.

The *zaouias* of these two marabouts, which we visited after that of the barber, were far from possessing the grace and beauty of the two monuments we had first seen.

DECEMBER 16.

The road from Kairwan toward Susa increased the feeling of depression felt in the Sacred City.

After passing long cemeteries, vast fields of stone, we came across hillocks of rubbish accumulated for centuries; then began once more the marshy plain, where we often drove over the backs of tortoises, and again the moor where camels pastured. Behind us, the town, the domes, the mosques, and minarets rose in that mournful solitude like a mirage of the desert, then they receded, and finally disappeared.

After driving several hours, we halted for the first time near a *koubba,* in a clump of olive-trees. We found ourselves at Sidi-L'Hanni, and I never saw the sun make of a white cupola a more astonishing marvel of colorings. Was it white? Yes, of a blinding whiteness! and yet the light was so strangely transformed on this large, egg-like structure that we could perceive an enchanting blending of mysterious shades, which seemed imaginary rather than real, so delicate and faint, so steeped in that whiteness of snow, that we did not see them immediately, only after the first astonished, dazzling glance were they revealed to us. And then we could see nothing but these numerous shadings, so varied and potent, though barely visible at the same time. The more we looked at them, the more pronounced did they become. Showers of gold flowed on these outlines, bathed in a dim lilac-like mist, crossed here and there by bluish rays. The motionless shadow was sometimes gray, or green, or yellow. Under the shelter of a cornice, the wall below it seemed violet; and I surmised the atmosphere must be mauve around that blinding dome, which

looked to me now almost pink; for on looking at it too closely, the tones and shades, so bright and clear, became confused under the brilliancy of the light. And the shadow thrown on the ground of this *koubba*, of what shade was it? Who could ever analyze, describe, or paint it? How many years should we have to steep our eyes and our thoughts in these indescribable colorings, so novel to us who have been taught to gaze at the atmosphere of Europe with its effects and reflections, before we could understand these, distinguish and express them so that we could give to those who would see them on canvas, where they would be painted by the brush of an artist, the complete rendering of their beauty as it really is?

We now reached a country less barren, where olive-trees grew. At Mouriddin, near a well, a beautiful girl laughed, showing her teeth as we passed by, and a little further on we overtook a rich merchant of Susa returning to town, riding a donkey and followed by a little negro boy who carried his gun. He had no doubt been inspecting his field of olives or his vineyards. In the road, boxed in with trees, he made a pretty picture. He was young, clothed in a green vest and a pink jacket, partly hidden under a silk burnous draped about his shoulders and hips. Seated like a woman on his donkey, which trotted along, he dangled his two legs incased in stockings of the purest white, while on his feet were two glossy slippers without heels, which held on in some inexplicable manner.

And the little negro boy, dressed in red, with a gun on his shoulder, ran with a wonderful agility behind his master's mount.

Here we were at Susa.

But I must have seen this town before to-day! Yes, of course, I had this luminous vision in days gone by, in the days of my life at school, when I studied the Crusades in the "History of France" by Burette. Oh, I have known it for so long! There must be Saracens behind that long battlemented rampart, so high and slender, with towers here and there, with the round doors and turbaned men roaming about at the entrance. Oh! that wall, it must be the very one that was drawn in our picture-books, so regular and clear-looking is it that one might think it cut out of cardboard. How pretty and bright!

If only to see Susa, this long trip is worth making. What a beautiful wall, reaching as far as the sea, for carriages cannot enter the narrow and winding streets of this town of other times. This wall ran along to the shore, with its battlements and square towers, then it made a curve, followed the beach, turned once more, ascended and continued in a circle, without once changing, not even for a few feet, the coquettish appearance of its Saracen bulwarks. And without ever ending, it began again, and looked like a chaplet of indented parapets and turrets, inclosing in its dazzling circle, as if in a crown of white paper, the city with its many stories of plaster houses; the lower wall was bathed in the sea while the topmost wall showed in profile against the sky.

After going through the town, an interweaving of astonishing lanes, as we had still another hour of daylight, we decided to go to see, at a distance of ten minutes from the gateway, the excavations being made by the authorities, on the site of the

burial-ground in Hadrumetum. Large vaults have been discovered, containing as many as twenty sepulchers, some of which bear traces of mural paintings. These researches are due to the officers, who become enthusiastic archæologists, and who would render science invaluable help if the administration of fine arts did not curb their zeal by most vexatious measures.

In 1860 there came to light in this same necropolis a very curious mosaic representing the labyrinth of Crete with the Minotaur in the center, and near the entrance, a bark bringing Theseus, with Ariadne and her thread. The Bey wished to have this remarkable mosaic brought to his museum, but it was completely destroyed on the way.

A photograph was kindly offered to me, made from a drawing of Mr. Larmande, draughtsman to the Government.

We returned to Susa at sunset, to dine at the residence of the French Civil Manager, who is one of the most learned and most interesting *raconteurs* of the manners and customs of this country. From his house we could see the whole town, a cascade of square, whitewashed roofs, where black cats ran about, and sometimes a phantom arose, draped in light or colored garments. From place to place a tall palm-tree grew between the houses and spread its green leaves over this even whiteness.

Then, when the moon rose, all this became a silver foam rolling toward the sea, a wonderful poet's dream realized, the improbable apparition of a fantastic city from which a gleam of light ascended to the heavens.

We wandered through the streets until a late hour. The door of a Moorish *café* attracted us, so we entered. It was full of men, seated or lying either on the ground or on the boards covered with rugs, around an Arabian story-teller. He was a fat old man with a roguish look, who spoke with a comical mimicry that was very amusing. He was relating a joke, the story of an impostor who tried to pass himself off for a marabout but whose identity the Iman revealed. His simple-minded auditors were delighted, and followed with great attention a recital which was interrupted only by loud laughter. We left after awhile and walked about for hours, for we could not retire, it was such a glorious night.

And behold, in a narrow street, we stopped in front of a fine Oriental house, whose open door showed a long straight staircase, decorated in tiles and illuminated from top to bottom by an invisible lamp, throwing a shower of light coming apparently from nowhere. Under this inexplicable radiance each enameled step seemed to be awaiting someone, perhaps some old fat Mussulman, but I think it must have been a young lover. Never did I understand the meaning of expectancy as I did before this open door and this deserted staircase, where an unseen lamp held vigil. Outside, on the wall lighted by the moon, hung a large closed balcony called a *barmakli.* There were two darkened openings in the middle, behind the valuable chiseled ironwork of the *moucharabis.* Was she in there, watching, listening, and hating us, this Arabian Juliet whose heart beat high? Perhaps so. But her desires were not like those which, in our country, would raise our senses to unknown heights

on such a night. On this enervating and lukewarm soil, so captivating that the legend of the lotus-eaters came from the island of Djerba, the atmosphere is sweeter than anywhere else, the sun warmer, daylight clearer, but the heart does not know how to love. The women, beautiful and intense, are ignorant of our tender caresses. Their simple souls are strangers to our sentimental emotions, and their kisses, it is said, are passionless.